# MAHATMA

LIFE OF MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

HE stopped at the thresholds of the huts of the thousands of dispossessed, dressed like one of their own. He spoke to them in their own language. Here was living truth at last, and not only quotations from books. For this reason the Mahatma, the name given to him by the people of India, is his real name. Who else has felt like him that all Indians are his own flesh and blood? When love came to the door of India, that door was opened wide. At Gandhi's call India blossomed forth to new greatness, just as once before, in earlier times, when Buddha proclaimed the truth of fellow-feeling and compassion among all living creatures.

Rabindranath Tagore

# MAHATMA

IN EIGHT VOLUMES

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# MAHATMA

## LIFE OF MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

*His is the One Luminous, Creator of All, Mahatma,*
*Always in the hearts of the people enshrined,*
*Revealed through Love, Intuition, and Thought,*
*Whoever knows Him, Immortal becomes.*


*By*

D. G. TENDULKAR

*Illustrations collected and arranged by*

VITHALBHAI K. JHAVERI


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## *From The Publishers*

THE FIRST volume depicted the formative period of the national movement and Gandhiji's leadership in the South African struggle and his emergence in the field of Indian politics. The second volume opened with the new epoch, the Gandhian era, and it ended with the passing of the resolution on complete independence at the Lahore Congress on the last day of 1929. The third volume covered some of his subsequent political and social activities: the historic march to Dandi; pleading India's case at the second Round Table Conference in London; campaign against untouchability; dynamic approach to swadeshi; his temporary retirement from the Congress in October 1934. The fourth volume depicted his ceaseless activities during 1934-8 in the field of village reconstruction. For full four years, he concentrated on constructive revolution or teaching the masses the art of turning the idle hours to wealth. His great popularity and his organizational genius enabled the Congress to sweep the polls in the elections of 1937. He confined himself to constructive activities, but he removed the self-imposed ban on politics by expressing his views fervently through *Harijan* for the benefit of the Congress ministers, Congressmen and the people in general. His articles on prohibition, basic education, duties and rights, the old order and the new, sanitation, medicine, self-control *v.* birth control, art and literature for the masses, became the guiding principles to all who wanted to think and act along the new philosophy of life. Intellectuals and workers from all over the world trekked to Sevagram to discuss new and old problems. The war-clouds seemed to burst when the Munich Pact was signed and he advised the Congress to stand by non-violence in war or in peace. There were rumblings in the Indian states and he directed the people's movement. The fifth volume depicted his re-emergence in the political field: the Rajkot struggle for securing rights to the states people, and the preparation for fight against the

gagging orders during the war period of 1938-40. The main theme of this volume is Gandhiji's supreme faith in the non-violence of the strong in the critical days of the war. The sixth volume narrated the momentous events of 1940-5: the launching of individual civil disobedience; failure of Cripps mission; Quit India campaign; imprisonment of Congress leaders; Gandhiji's epic fast in Aga Khan Palace; death of Mahadev and Kasturba in the detention camp; Gandhiji's release and the political deadlock.

The seventh volume depicts Gandhiji's unflagging efforts, at the age of seventy-five, to lift India out of the mire of her political and cultural slavery, poverty, disease, illiteracy and the communal strife. His last unsuccessful battle against the partition of India, his epic tour of Noakhali, his remonstration against communal vengeance in Bihar form the main theme of this volume.

The eighth and last volume will bring Gandhiji's epic story to a close and will record the crowning years of the prince of peace who sacrificed his life to save India's proud heritage.

In this arduous task of collecting material and undertaking the publication of eight-volume life of Gandhiji, we have had the co-operation from several friends and sympathizers, individual acknowledgements to whom are already made in the introduction to the first volume.

Gandhiji gave his graceful co-operation and thus made our work smoother. Jawaharlal Nehru has taken a keen interest in the publication and continues to give encouragement. R. R. Diwakar has helped us from the very beginning and he has made possible its publication in the present form.

Anu Bandyopadhyaya has given her ample co-operation in seeing the proofs, preparing the glossary and index.

Sumati Morarjee has lent us her unique collection of illustrations for embellishing the biography.

We are thankful to the workers of the Times of India Press for their co-operation.

Although the greatest care is taken in the preparation of this biography, we should be thankful if readers point out any mistakes they may come across in these volumes.

D. G. Tendulkar
Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri

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*Jacket and fly-leaf designed by Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri*

# MAHATMA

## *Simla Conference*

1945

DURING THE early months of 1945, the pattern of Indian politics was changing. Though most of its leaders were still in detention, the Congress had become active both in the constructive field and the parliamentary activities. It had abandoned its boycott of the Central Assembly and it had succeeded, in conjunction with other parties, in securing the Government's defeat on four or five occasions.

In March 1945 Dr. Khan Sahib formed a Congress ministry in the North-West Frontier Province, having defeated the Muslim League ministry. A few weeks later, Muslim League came to terms with the Congress and formed a ministry in Assam. The Congressmen would not accept any seat in it, but they undertook to support it on the understanding that the persons detained on political grounds should be released and the existing restrictions on political activity withdrawn. In Bengal, the Muslim League ministry succumbed to internal intrigues and the Governor of Bengal declared the province to be under Section 93. There was a League ministry only in Sind.

Bhulabhai Desai made an overture to the Viceroy for securing an interim reconstruction of the Executive Council on the basis of complete Indianization; apportionment of seats which would give forty per cent each to the Congress party and the Muslim League party, with twenty per cent reserved for the minorities and a start to be made under the auspices of the new organized government with constitution-making. This formula was based on an understanding between Bhulabhai Desai and Liaquat Ali Khan, that each would present these proposals for acceptance by the Congress and League, provided the British first gave a favourable response. Both Gandhi and Jinnah were in the know of the plan, but they would say nothing about it publicly.

There was another attempt made by Sapru under the auspices of the Conciliation Committee. At the outset, Sapru was able to state

that Gandhi had indicated willingness to co-operate but an effort to obtain the co-operation of Jinnah and Dr. Ambedkar failed, the former refusing to recognize the committee in any way. In April, the committee issued its report, containing proposals for the future constitution of India, while a week earlier it had cabled a resolution to the Viceroy, putting forward specific proposals for the immediate formation of a national government at the Centre and the restoration of ministries in the provinces. The committee's proposals for future constitution envisaged an Indian Union, with both provinces and states forming component units. It advocated joint electorates and came out emphatically against the demand for Pakistan.

The public opinion in Great Britain was getting increasingly impatient with the continued prolongation of the deadlock. However, the discussion of the Indian problem had been thrown in the background by the events in the West—the last phase of the war in Germany, the death of President Roosevelt, the preparations for the San Francisco Conference. The British Government tried its best to put up a show at the San Francisco Conference, creating an impression that India was practically independent. Gandhi raised his voice against this sinister attempt. On April 18 he issued the following statement from Bombay:

"Though I know that silence is better than the spoken or written word, there are well-defined limitations to the application of this maxim. The San Francisco Conference is announced to meet shortly. I do not know its agenda. Probably no outsider knows it.

"Whatever it may be, the conference will have much to do with the world-to-be, after the so-called end of the war. I very much fear that behind the structure of world security sought to be raised lurk mistrust and fear, which breed war. Therefore, as a lifelong believer in peace as against war, it seems well for me to record my convictions in the matter.

"I reiterate my conviction that there will be no peace for the allies or the world, unless they shed their belief in the efficacy of war and its accompanying terrible deception and fraud, and are determined to hammer out real peace based on freedom and equality of all races and nations. Exploitation and domination of one nation over another can have no place in a world striving to put an end to all war. In such a world, only the militarily weaker nations will be free from the fear of intimidation or exploitation.

"An indispensable preliminary to peace is the complete freedom of India from all foreign control, not merely because it is a classic example of imperialist domination but specially because it is a big, ancient and cultured country, which has fought for its freedom since 1920, deliberately by truth and non-violence as its only weapon.

"Though the Indian soldier has fought not for India's freedom, he has shown during this war, as never before, that he is at least an equal to the best in his fighting qualities. I cite this to answer the charge that India's peaceful struggle is due to its lack of soldierly quality. The inevitable deduction that I draw from this is that the non-violence of the strong is infinitely braver than their violence. That India may not yet have evolved such non-violence is another matter. And if it is the case, it does not detract from the statement that it has battled non-violently for freedom, and that not without considerable success.

"Freedom of India will demonstrate to all the exploited races of the earth that their freedom is very near, and that in no case will they henceforth be exploited.

"Peace must be just. In order to be that, peace must neither be punitive nor vindictive. Germany and Japan should not be humiliated. The strong are never vindictive. Therefore, fruits of peace must be equally shared. The effort then will be to turn them into friends. The allies can prove their democracy by no other means.

"It follows from the foregoing that there will be no armed peace imposed upon the forcibly disarmed. All will be disarmed. There will be an international police force to enforce the lightest terms of peace. Even this retention of an international police will be a concession to human weakness, not by any means an emblem of peace.

"If these foregoing essentials of peace are accepted, it follows that the camouflage of Indian representation through the Indians nominated by British imperialism should be dropped. Such representation will be worse than no representation. Either India at the San Francisco is represented by an elected representative or represented not at all."

"We have at this conference an Indian delegation," declared M. Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, "but India is not an independent state. We all know that the time will come when the voice of independent India will be heard too." Against the nominated Indian delegates, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit raised her voice in her

personal capacity and pricked the bubble of the British propaganda. Sir Firoz Khan Noon said that "it is really shocking that a claim should be put forward by those very people who are the agents of Gandhi's party in this country, that they should be represented at the San Francisco Conference."

Sir Firoz denounced Gandhi as pro-Japanese and demanded that Gandhi should yield his leadership to Nehru.

On May 4, Gandhi gave the following reply to Sir Firoz Khan Noon from Mahabaleshwar:

"Time was when I was considered by the British rulers as pro-Japanese, but they quietly withdrew the remark. There was not the slightest foundation for it. It comes somewhat as a surprise that Sir Firoz should make such a statement at this juncture. It may interest him to know that even when the British had suffered severe reverses, I told the masses that the British were fighters who were never dismayed by defeats, delighted in bungling and never learned except by making and even repeating mistakes. I commend my writings before the August of 1942 to Sir Firoz.

"I stood for unadulterated Indian independence and, therefore, could not afford to be lukewarm about the Japanese or any other power's success against the British. My purpose was to end British or any other foreign rule in India, as a whole, through non-violent non-co-operation and civil resistance.

"Next I come to Sir Firoz's statement about Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and me. He should know that I have called the Pandit my successor. He does not need to come to the front. He is in the front. The Government would not let him work, as he would. He and I are friends. But we are no rivals. We are both servants of the people and the platform of service is as big as the world. It is never overcrowded. On it there is always room for more and as on the point of independence we have no differences, we are always brothers in arms. He has undoubtedly the advantage of youth over me.

"Let Sir Firoz Khan Noon ask his Government on pain of resignation to release Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his fellow prisoners and he will see his wish fulfilled. I shall give him my hearty co-operation in its fulfilment.

"Let him make no capital out of my supposed bigotry or orthodoxy. He may not know that I have never been a bigot or known as such, since my youth. And orthodoxy would have me for my un-

compromising and radical attitude on untouchability and general social reform. Sir Firoz is on safer ground, when he accuses me of being out of date. For, no one knows what or who is out of date. I confess my ignorance on the point."

At this stage George Bernard Shaw stepped in to defend Gandhi: "Gandhi's politics are half a century out of date. His tactics like all tactics are subject to error and readjustment, but his strategy is sound, as it was fifty or five million years ago." As for his retiring, he added: "Retire from what? His position is natural, not official. The Mahatma cannot hand over anything. Leadership is not a plug of tobacco that can be passed from one man to another."

The Government tried to sidetrack the issue of independence by talking of industrialization of India. They welcomed industrialists like Sir Ardeshir Dalal and Mr. G. D. Birla to their counsels. Gandhi again raised his voice from Mahabaleshwar on May 6:

"This question has been put to me: 'What do you think of the future plans now being made by Government to dispose of Indian industries under high-sounding phrases, through nationalist-minded Sir Ardeshir Dalal and through the visit of capitalists reported to be presently despatched unofficially to America and England, under the auspices of the Government of India?'

"Nothing said by those outside the Government circle seems to matter. They have come to know that the best of us will speak loud and give it the lie by our action. Big merchants, capitalists, industrialists and others speak and write against the Government but, in action, do its will and even profit through it, though the profit may amount to, say, five per cent, against the Government's ninety-five. Circumstances alone may be to blame for the condition in which the country has been weltering, since the advent of British commerce backed by British guns.

"The bright spot in the situation, however, is that all the big interests proclaim with one voice that India wants nothing less than her own elected national government to shape her destiny free of all control, British or other. This independence will not come for the asking. It will come only, when the interests, big or small, are prepared to forgo the crumbs that fall to them from partnership with the British in the loot which the British rule takes from India. The verbal protests will count for nothing, so long as the partnership continues unchecked.

"The so-called unofficial deputation which, the protestants fear, will go to England and America dare not proceed, whether for inspection or for entering on a shameful deal, so long as the moving spirits of the Working Committee are being detained without any trial for the sole crime of sincerely striving for India's independence without shedding a drop of blood, save their own."

The industrialists were angry with Gandhi and Mr. Birla wired: "The industrial delegation is going purely as a non-official body, at its own expense, with a view to meet people and to study the latest method of production and scientific achievement. Your statement is sure to be construed as a strong denunciation of our motives. We count on your blessing."

"My statement was necessary," rejoined Gandhi. "It deals with a hypothetical case. It was no hasty opinion. The statement expresses the view which I have always held. You have my blessing and prayer in terms of famishing and naked India."

On May 7, Germany surrendered unconditionally to the allies. On May 8, Gandhi's message of condolence to Mrs. Roosevelt was released to the press:

"My humble condolence and congratulations, latter because your illustrious husband died in harness and after the war had reached a point where the allied victory had become certain. He was spared humiliating spectacle of being party to peace which threatens to be prelude to war, bloodier still if possible."

In the last week of May, Mr. Churchill decided to hold a general election in Great Britain and the National Government came to an end. India now shot, meteor-like, into the tense British pre-election campaign. Mr. Bevin declared at the Labour Party conference: "If we are returned, we will close the India Office and transfer this business to the dominions." Professor Laski, Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party, stated that proposals were made by his party for the solution of Indian deadlock. Labour, he said, had asked for immediate release of the political prisoners in India. "The time for *modus vivendi* is now. A day after victory over Japan, it will be too late." Mr. Rajani Palme Dutt, a well-known communist and Indian candidate for Mr. Amery's constituency, described Mr. Amery as the "gaoler of India" and stated that "it is not merely the duty of the British people but it is an international duty to clear out Amerys and their like from political life."

On June 5, Lord Wavell returned to India after about ten weeks' consultation in London. On June 14, he delivered a broadcast talk and made the following proposals: (1) The British Government cannot impose "self-governing institutions upon an unwilling India". As they declared in 1942, the new constitution must be framed by the Indians; and they still hope that they may be able to agree as to the method. Meantime they are anxious to do all they can under the existing constitution to secure the co-operation of all communities and the sections of the Indian people in carrying on the war with Japan and in planning the post-war economic development. (2) To that end, it is proposed to reconstitute the central Executive Council, so that all its members, except the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, would be the Indian political leaders, the Caste Hindus and the Muslims being equally represented. The portfolio of the External Affairs would be transferred from the Governor-General to an Indian member of the council, and fully accredited persons would be appointed to represent India abroad. (3) In furtherance of this plan, the Viceroy will call a conference of the party leaders and provincial premiers and ex-premiers who will be asked to submit to him lists of names, from which he can select the personnel of the new Executive Council. (4) Co-operation at the centre will doubtless make possible the resumption of responsible government in the Section 93 provinces. (5) These proposals embody, in the British Government's opinion, "the utmost progress practicable within the present constitution", and none of them "will in any way prejudice or prejudge the essential form of the future permanent constitution or constitutions for India".

In the House of Commons, Mr. Amery stated that the members of the Congress Working Committee, who were still in custody, were to be released; Lord Wavell had fully consulted the previous cabinet of which the Labour leaders were members, and the proposals represented "an agreed national offer on the part of this country to the people of India".

In the press statement issued on June 15, Gandhi said:

"On the purely political aspect of the Viceregal broadcast, I prefer to say nothing. Now that the members of the Working Committee of the Congress are free, I can only give them my advice and it is they who have to shape the policy of the Congress, and speak and act with authority.

"As soon as I read the broadcast, I sent a wire to His Excellency the Viceroy drawing his attention to the fact that I have no *locus standi* as the recognized representative of the Congress.

"That function belongs to the President of the Congress, or whoever may be appointed to represent the Congress on a particular occasion. For several years, I have acted unofficially as an adviser to the Congress whenever required. The public will remember that I went with the same unrepresentative character for my talks with Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah, and I can take up no other position with the British Government, in this instance, represented by the Viceroy.

"There is one expression in the Viceregal broadcast, which certainly offends my ear and which, I hope, will offend that of every politically-minded Hindu. I refer to the expression 'Caste Hindu'. I claim that there is no such person, speaking politically, as a 'Caste Hindu', let alone the Congress which seeks to represent the whole of India which is yearning after political independence. Does not Veer Savarkar or Dr. Shyama Prosad or Dr. Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha represent all the Hindus without distinction of caste? Do they not include the so-called untouchable? Do they themselves claim to be Caste Hindus? I hope not. Of all the politically-minded Hindus, I know that even the revered Pandit Malaviyaji, though he observes caste distinctions, will refuse to be called a Caste Hindu, as distinguished from the other Hindus. The modern tendency in Hinduism is to abolish all caste distinctions and this I maintain, in spite of my knowledge of the reactionary elements in Hindu society. I can only hope, therefore, that H. E. the Viceroy has allowed himself to make use of that expression in utter ignorance. I want to acquit him of knowingly wounding the susceptibilities of the Hindu society or dividing it. I would not have dwelt on this matter, but for the fact that it touches the political mind of Hindus in its sensitive spot and carries with it political repercussions.

"The proposed conference can do much useful work, if it is put in its proper political setting and is, at the very outset, rendered immune from any fissiparous tendency. Undoubtedly all the invitees might appear as Indians, conjointly bent on achieving the natural goal of India and not as persons representing several sections of the Indian society. That is how I have viewed the Bhulabhai-Liaquat Ali understanding, which I suppose has laid the foundation for the forthcoming Viceregal conference. Shri Bhulabhai Desai's proposal

has no such colouring as the Viceregal broadcast would seem to have. I am not ashamed of the part I have played in advising Shri Bhulabhai Desai, when he consulted me about his proposal. His proposal, as I understood it, attracted me as one interested in solving the communal tangle, and I assured him that I would use my influence with the members of the Working Committee and give my reasons for the acceptance of his proposal and I have no doubt that, if both parties to the proposal correctly represent their constituents and have independence of India as their common goal, things must shape well. At this point, I must stop and the Working Committee has to take up the thread. It is for its members to declare the Congress mind on the impending questions."

Lord Wavell issued urgent invitations to a conference to be held in Simla. Gandhi said that he could not represent the Congress; though he would go to Simla, he could not attend the conference. He asked, and Lord Wavell agreed, that Azad should be invited instead. In a telegram dated June 18, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy: "Grateful for directly inviting the Maulana Saheb. Members being free at conference to accept or reject proposals clears ground for invitees to attend conference. My objection to inevitability of parity between Muslims and Caste Hindus stands. If that view incapable of being altered by the British Government, my advice to Congress will not be to participate in formation of Executive Council. The Congress has never identified itself with Caste or non-Caste Hindus and never can even to gain independence which will be one-sided, untrue and suicidal. Congress to justify its existence for winning independence of India must remain for ever free to choose best men and women from all classes and I hope always will. Though it has for sake of conciliating minorities chosen men to represent them, though they have been less than best, redounds to its credit but that never can be pleaded to justify or perpetuate distinction based on caste or creed. Hindu Mahasabha is the body claiming to represent solely Hindu interests. Subject to the Working Committee wishes, I shall hope to present myself at Simla on 24th instant."

Bhulabhai Desai's proposals had no colouring of caste, Gandhi observed in a press interview on the Wavell offer. He added that there was fifty per cent basis as between the two political bodies, according to that formula. If the Congress chose, it could appoint fifty per cent of any community. If Bhulabhai Desai's proposals were

the same as the Viceroy's, he was greatly mistaken. Gandhi had his own opinion about the clarification by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State about the question of independence, but it was a question for the Congress Working Committee to consider. Gandhi observed that the composition of the Simla conference was a very great advance upon all similar bodies, for in all previous conferences convened by the British Government the members had been nominated by the Government principally. This time the members of the Simla conference were under no obligation of the Government for their nomination and the members need not vote and speak to placate the Government.

Answering the question about the omission of the Hindu Mahasabha, Gandhi said that probably the British Government wanted to avoid the Simla conference being based on religious distinction and, therefore, for examining the proposal, they invited political representatives only. Another explanation that suggested to him was: "I do not know whether it is a method of putting the Congress in the place of the Hindu Mahasabha and treating it as a sectional or Hindu body, and if it is that, which I hope is not, the Congress will be one to avoid the whole show."

On the eve of his departure for the Working Committee meeting in Bombay, he released to the press, on June 18, a letter which he had written to Churchill from Panchgani about a year ago:

"This is perhaps an opportune moment to release the text of the letter which I wrote to the British Prime Minister during my stay at Panchgani last year. The letter was written in the small hours of the night of July 17 at the same time that I wrote my Gujarati note to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah, and duly posted to be sent through H. E. the Viceroy. Unfortunately, the letter miscarried.

"Having waited for a long time, on September 10, 1944, during my visit to Bombay for the meeting with the Qaid-e-Azam, I sent a letter of inquiry out of curiosity, for the psychological moment had passed. To my surprise, the Private Secretary to the Viceroy wrote in return on September 13, that the letter in question was not received by him. As I attached importance to that letter, I sent him a copy of the missing letter on September 17, 1944, repeating the request that it might be sent to the Prime Minister.

"My letter of July 17 to Mr. Churchill, in my estimation, was of a sacred character, not meant for the public eye, but I could

contemplate an occasion or time, when it might call for publication without losing the sacred character.

"I, therefore, requested the Viceroy on December 13, 1944, to inquire from the Prime Minister, whether I had his permission to publish it in case of need. He replied through his secretary that the Prime Minister agreed to the publication of my letter, subject to the fact, that it was duly acknowledged.

"The following is the text of the letter:

" 'Dear Prime Minister,—You are reported to have a desire to crush the simple "Naked Fakir", as you are said to have described me. I have been long trying to be a fakir and that naked—a more difficult task. I, therefore, regard the expression as a compliment, though unintended. I approach you then as such, and ask you to trust and use me for the sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world.—Your sincere friend, M. K. Gandhi.' "

On June 21, Gandhi met the members of the Working Committee in Bombay, after separation of nearly three years. The committee met to discuss the Viceroy's proposals. It decided that the Congress as an organization should participate in the Simla conference. The Congress invitees were asked to accept the invitation and attend the conference. The decision of the Working Committee was conveyed to the Viceroy on June 22.

On June 25 the invitees assembled at the Viceregal Lodge, Simla. They included the premiers or ex-premiers of the eleven provinces, the Presidents of the Congress and the League, the Congress leader and the Muslim League deputy leader in the Central Assembly, namely, Bhulabhai Desai and Liaquat Ali Khan, the Congress and the Muslim League leaders in the Council of State, leaders of the Nationalist Party and of the European group in the assembly, and one representative of the Scheduled Castes and one of the Sikhs. Gandhi did not attend the conference, but he was present at Simla for consultation.

In the short address with which Lord Wavell inaugurated the conference, he reaffirmed his hope that its outcome would pave the way to a final solution of India's complex constitutional problem: "You must accept my leadership for the present. Until there is some agreed change in the constitution, I am responsible to His Majesty's Government for the good government and welfare of India. I ask you to believe in me as a sincere friend of India."

Opinion at the outset was optimistic. Rajagopalachari claimed, during the session of the conference, that the "goodwill and mutual trust" between the Congress and the British people had been "to a large extent" restored. It was plainly not a question, as it was in the days of the Cripps mission, of the measure of power to be transferred to Indians, but only of its distribution among them. It was agreed that some seats on the new council should be allotted to the Scheduled Castes and Sikhs and possibly to other minorities; and it was not contested that the Muslims were to have as many seats as the Caste Hindus. The point in dispute was who those Muslims were to be.

It came to a head, when on June 29 Azad and Jinnah, who had been in close contact with their Working Committees assembled at Simla, reported their failure to agree as to the strength and the composition of the Executive Council. The conference was thereupon adjourned till July 14 for further informal consultation, and Lord Wavell asked the party leaders to provide him with the lists from which he might select, on his own responsibility, the personnel of the new Executive Council.

By July 7, the Congress and all the minor parties had submitted lists to the Viceroy. Only the Muslim League had refused to do so although, at the same time, it had refrained from breaking off the negotiations. It was understood that the Congress list was, in effect, a recommendation for the composition of the council as a whole; that it, therefore, included representatives of all major parties, including Jinnah and two other members of Muslim League; and that the names of only five Congressmen were submitted, two of whom, however, were Azad and Asaf Ali. Azad himself made it clear that the inclusion of those two Muslims in the Congress panel was a matter of principle. The Congress, he said, is "essentially a national organization, and it cannot possibly be a party to any arrangement, howsoever temporary it may be, that prejudices its national character, tends to impair its growth of nationalism, and reduces the Congress indirectly to a communal body".

The Congress claim to include Muslims in its party list was not the only difficulty. The Premier of the Punjab and the leader of the Unionist Party, Malik Khizr Hyat Khan, was a member of the conference, and he had asked that one of the Muslim seats should be allotted to his own province. This was the second point of the

conflict with the League, and a point of more immediate practical importance than the first. The primary task of the new council would be to finish war with Japan, and the Punjab Muslims were playing an important role in the army.

Persistent attempts were being made to overcome these difficulties by private discussion, but Jinnah remained adamant. He declined to submit a list on the League's behalf without an assurance that all the Muslim members of the new council would be members of the League. So, when the conference met again on July 14, Lord Wavell announced its breakdown. He ended with the statement, "I propose to take a little time to consider in what way I can best help India after the failure of the conference."

Jinnah speaking on the failure of the conference said: "On a final examination and the analysis of the Wavell Plan, we found that it was a snare. There was the combination consisting of Gandhi and Hindu Congress, who stand for India's Hindu national independence as one India, and the latest exponent of geographical unity, Lord Wavell and Glancy-Khizr, who are bent upon creating disruption among the Muslims in Punjab, and we were sought to be pushed into this arrangement, which, if we had agreed to, as proposed by Lord Wavell, we should have signed our death-warrant."

Azad stated that he appreciated Lord Wavell's efforts for a solution of the political deadlock. A firm attitude on the part of the Viceroy, he added, which was logical and based on the principle of justice and fair play, alone could bring about a settlement of the communal problem. The Viceroy's present wavering attitude was neither correct nor helpful. Hesitation and weakness could never bring about a solution. "We are very near our goal," he said, "and the next stage is the goal itself. It does not matter at all what the intentions of the British Government are."

On July 26, in less than a fortnight after the conclusion of the Simla conference, the Labour Government came into power in Britain, while two weeks later, surrender of Japan finally brought the war to an end. The victory of the Labour Party was widely welcomed in India. A notable incident was the defeat of Mr. Amery. Lord Pethick-Lawrence was appointed Secretary of State for India. In a cable to Mr. Attlee, the new British Premier, President Azad wrote: "Hearty congratulations to the people of Great Britain on behalf of the people of India on the results of the elections, which

demonstrate their abandonment of the old ideas and acceptance of a new world."

On August 21 came the announcement that the general elections to the central and the provincial legislatures would be held at the earliest possible date and that the Viceroy was again returning to London for consultation. On September 19, in a broadcast speech made simultaneously in England and India by the Prime Minister and the Viceroy, it was announced that the British Government intended, as soon as possible, after the elections and after consultation with the representatives of the legislative assemblies, to bring into being a constitution-making body, and that, meanwhile, immediate consideration was to be given to the contents of a treaty "which will require to be concluded between Britain and India". It was also announced that the Viceroy had been authorized, as soon as the election results were known, to take steps to bring into being an Executive Council.

A meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress was held in Poona from September 12 to September 18 and again in Bombay on September 21. Azad presided. Gandhi was present at most of the sittings. Among the several resolutions passed, one on united India and self-determination was as follows:

"In accordance with the August 1942 resolution of the All-India Congress Committee it will be for a democratically elected constituent assembly to prepare a constitution for the government of India, acceptable to all sections of the people. This constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one, with the residuary powers vesting in the units. The fundamental rights as laid down by the Karachi Congress, and subsequently added to, must form an integral part of this constitution. And further, as declared by the A.-I.C.C. at its meeting held in Allahabad in May 1942, the Congress cannot agree to any proposal to disintegrate India by giving liberty to any component state or any territorial unit to secede from the Indian Union or the Federation. The Congress, as the Working Committee proclaimed in April 1942, has been wedded to Indian freedom and unity and any break in that unity, especially in the modern world, when the people's minds inevitably think in terms of ever larger federations, would be injurious to all concerned and exceedingly painful to contemplate. Nevertheless, the committee declared also that it cannot think in terms of compelling the people

in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will. While recognizing this principle, every effort should be made to create conditions, which would help the different units in developing a common and co-operative national life. Acceptance of the principle inevitably involves that no changes should be made, which result in fresh problems being created and compulsion being exercised on other substantial groups within that area. Each territorial unit should have the fullest possible autonomy within the union, consistently with a strong national state."

A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee commenced in Bombay on September 21. Azad presided and 283 members participated and about 25,000 people were present there to witness the proceedings. Azad addressing the A.-I.C.C. said: "All our minds are powerfully drawn towards a certain incident. Incidents in our life come and pass on, but there are some which leave their imprint upon the robe of life which even time cannot erase. Just over three years ago, the A.-I.C.C. session was held on exactly the same grounds. During these three years, a big story of India's national life has passed on."

"The story of these three years has two aspects," he added, "the one of trials and tribulations and the other of the forces which have been created by these conditions. The power of nations springs from such hardships. An Arabic proverb says: 'Hardships have the same effect on life, as fire has on gold.'"

The A.-I.C.C. met again on September 22. Nehru moved the resolution on the "Struggle of 1942 and after" and Sardar Patel seconded it. The resolution congratulated the nation on the courage and endurance with which it had withstood the fierce and violent onslaught of the British power and it conveyed its sympathy to all those who suffered during these three years of military, police and ordinance rule. It, however, condemned violence in some places where the people forgot and fell away from the Congress method of peaceful and non-violent action. But the resolution added that it "realizes that the provocative action of the Government in effecting sudden and widespread arrests of all well-known leaders, and the brutal and ruthless repression of peaceful demonstrations, goaded them to rise spontaneously to resist the armed might of an alien imperialist power which was trying to crush the spirit and passionate desire of the Indian people to gain independence".

Speaking on the resolution, Nehru condemned the path followed by the Indian communists: "If there was a people's war movement it was this anti-imperialist uprising. If there are people who think there was any other, they are on the wrong path."

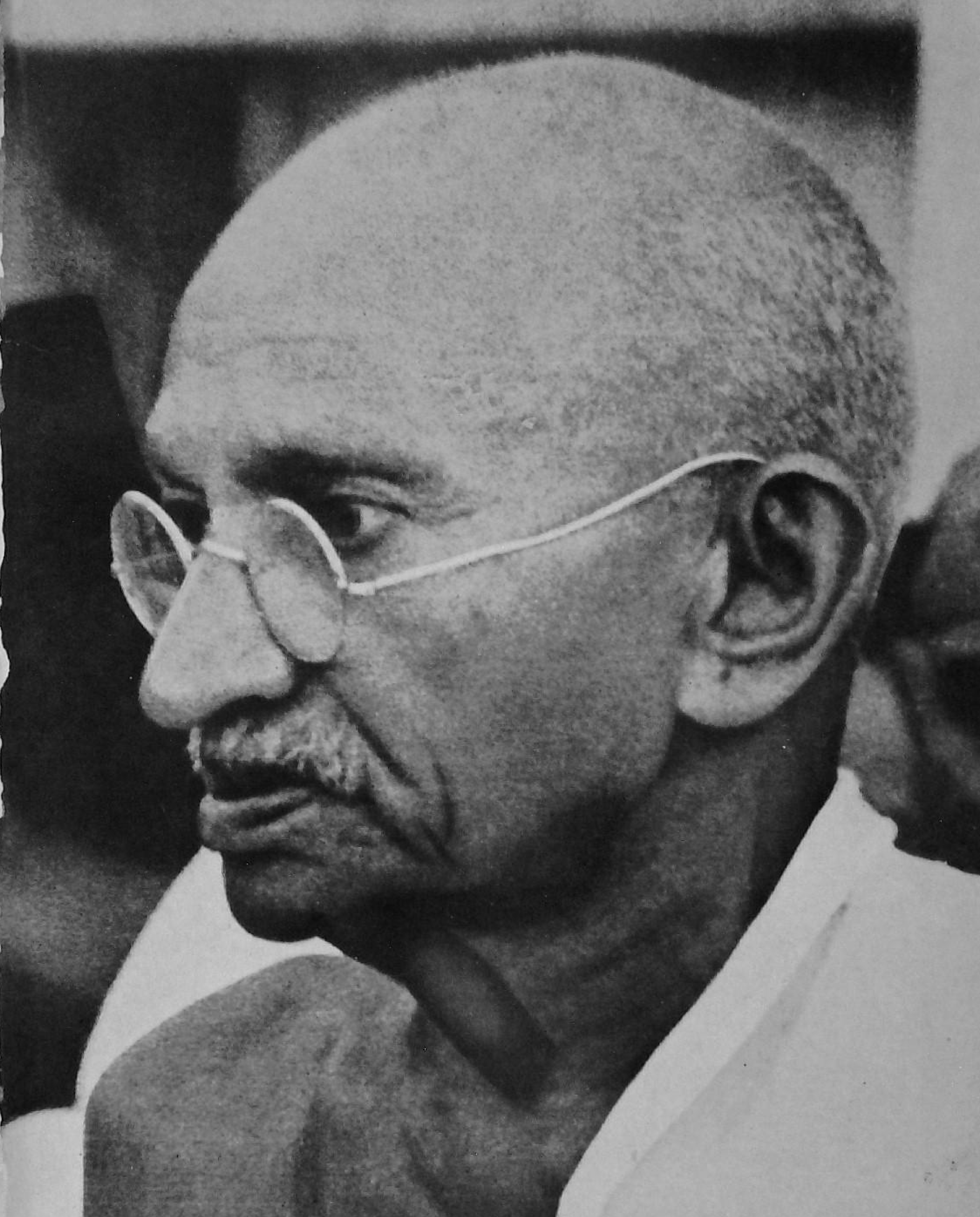
J. B. Kripalani, the General Secretary of the Congress, moved the resolution on the Congress policy. After referring to the failure of the Simla conference, the resolution said that the policy of the alien Government did not give hope for the future in the shape of frank co-operation between the Government and the people in bringing freedom. The resolution reiterated the Congress method of negotiation and settlement, when possible, and non-co-operation and direct action, when necessary.

On the last day of the A.-I.C.C. session, Nehru moved the resolution on the Indian National Army formed in Malaya and Burma in 1942. It referred to the circumstances, both political and military, at the time, and pointed out that it would be "a tragedy if these officers, men and women, were punished for the offence of having laboured, however mistakenly, for the freedom of India." He cited the instances from the last war, when the armies of the then subject countries of Czechoslovakia and Poland were treated as prisoners of war, even when they went over to the enemy's side. He announced that a defence committee had been formed by the Congress, consisting of Tej Bahadur Sapru and Bhulabhai Desai, and invited the other parties into it.

Sardar Patel then moved the Working Committee resolution on Wavell's broadcast talk. The resolution characterized his proposals as "vague and inadequate and unsatisfactory", that the amendment about elections aroused suspicion, the dissolution of the legislatures evidenced the Government's hostility to a popular government. It criticized the absurdly narrow franchise to the Central Assembly and the gross imperfections of the electoral rolls. It demanded the lifting of the bans, disqualifications and restrictions on the Congress Socialist Party, Forward Bloc and kisan organizations, and said that everyone sentenced for political activities must be released.

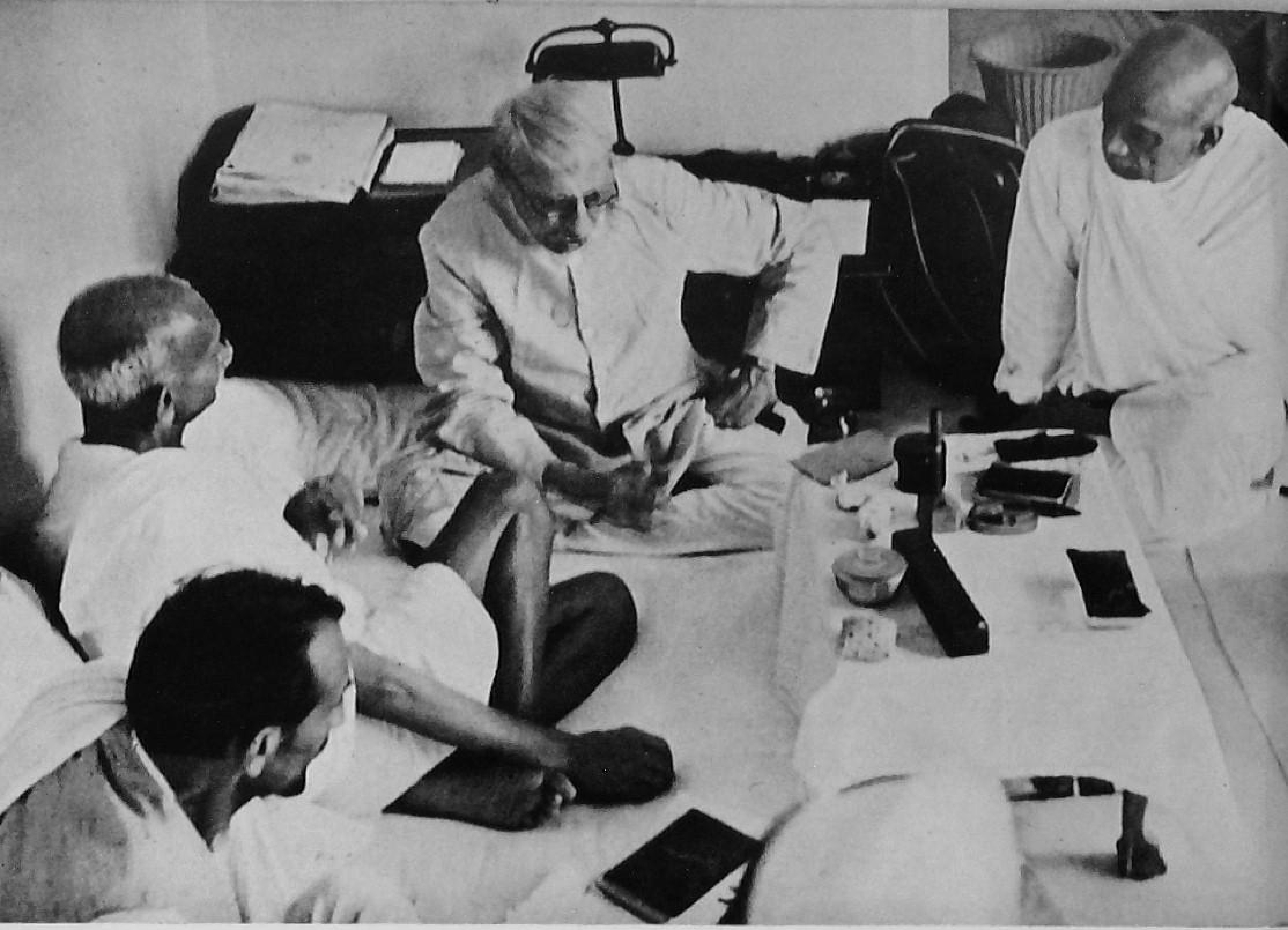
The resolution condemned Wavell's proposals, because they left a corrupt, incompetent administration in power for many months more and regarded it as proof of the desire to hold on to power.

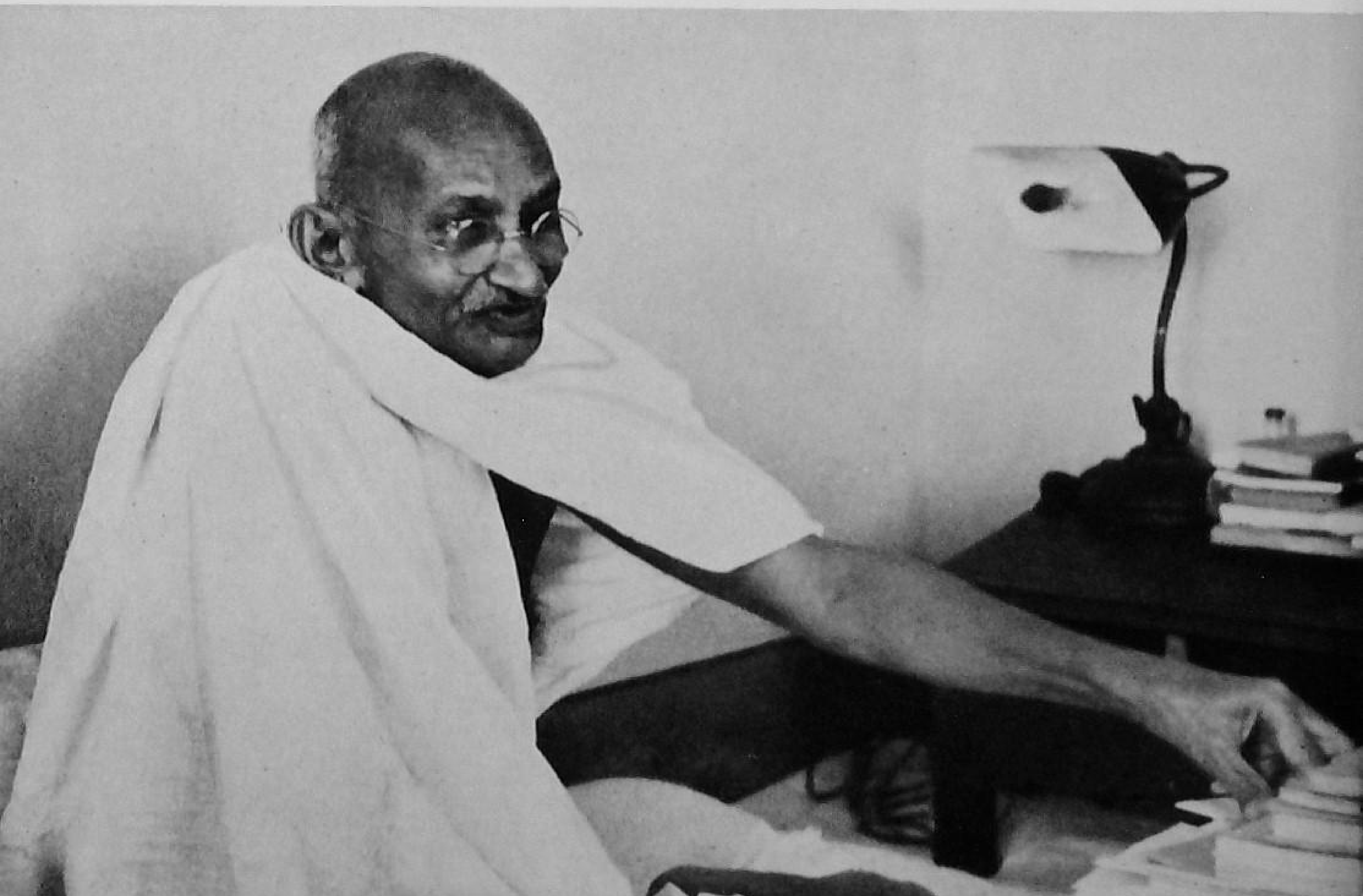
The last part of the resolution said that, nevertheless, the Congress would contest the elections to demonstrate the will of the people, on



Photograph : D R. D. Wadia

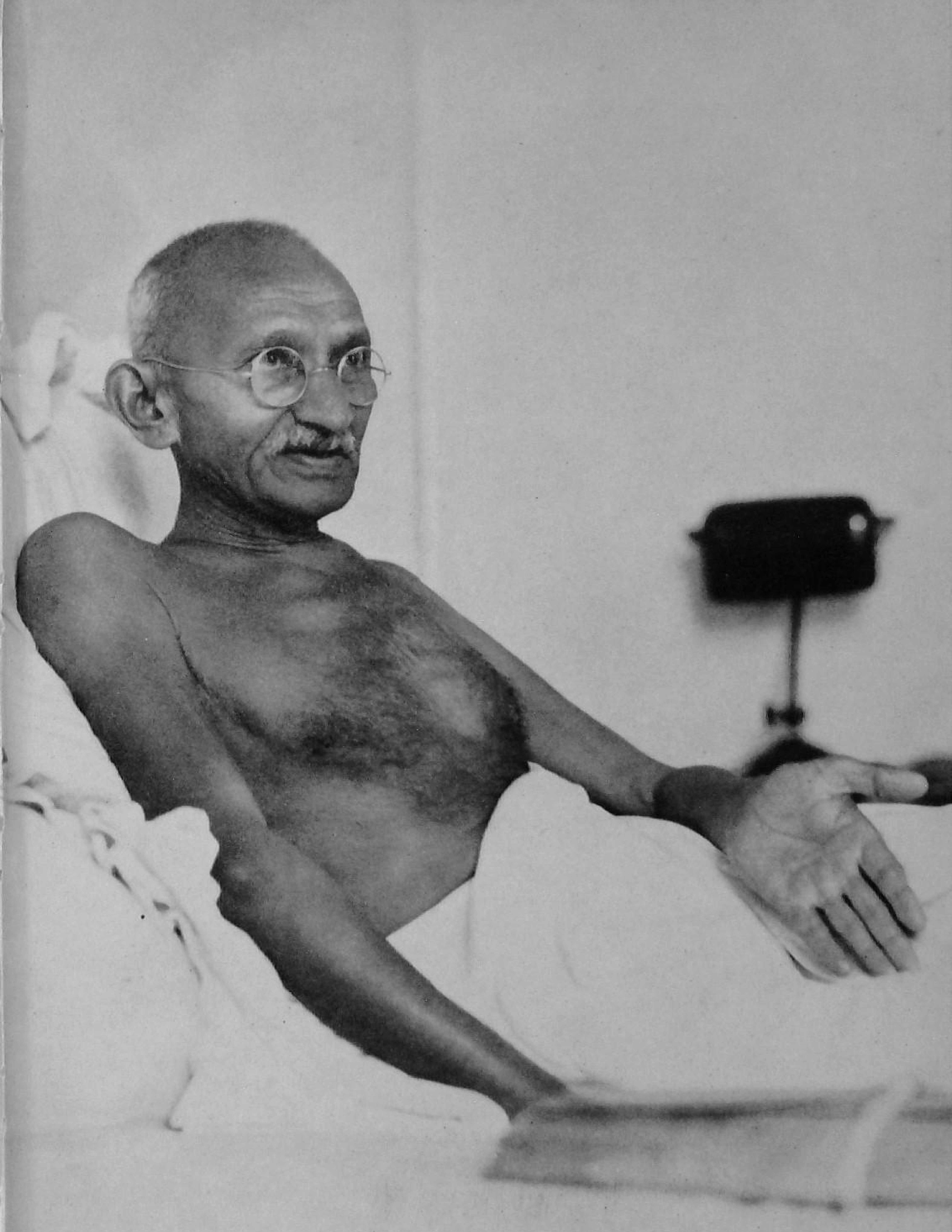
Gandhi in Bombay, June 1945





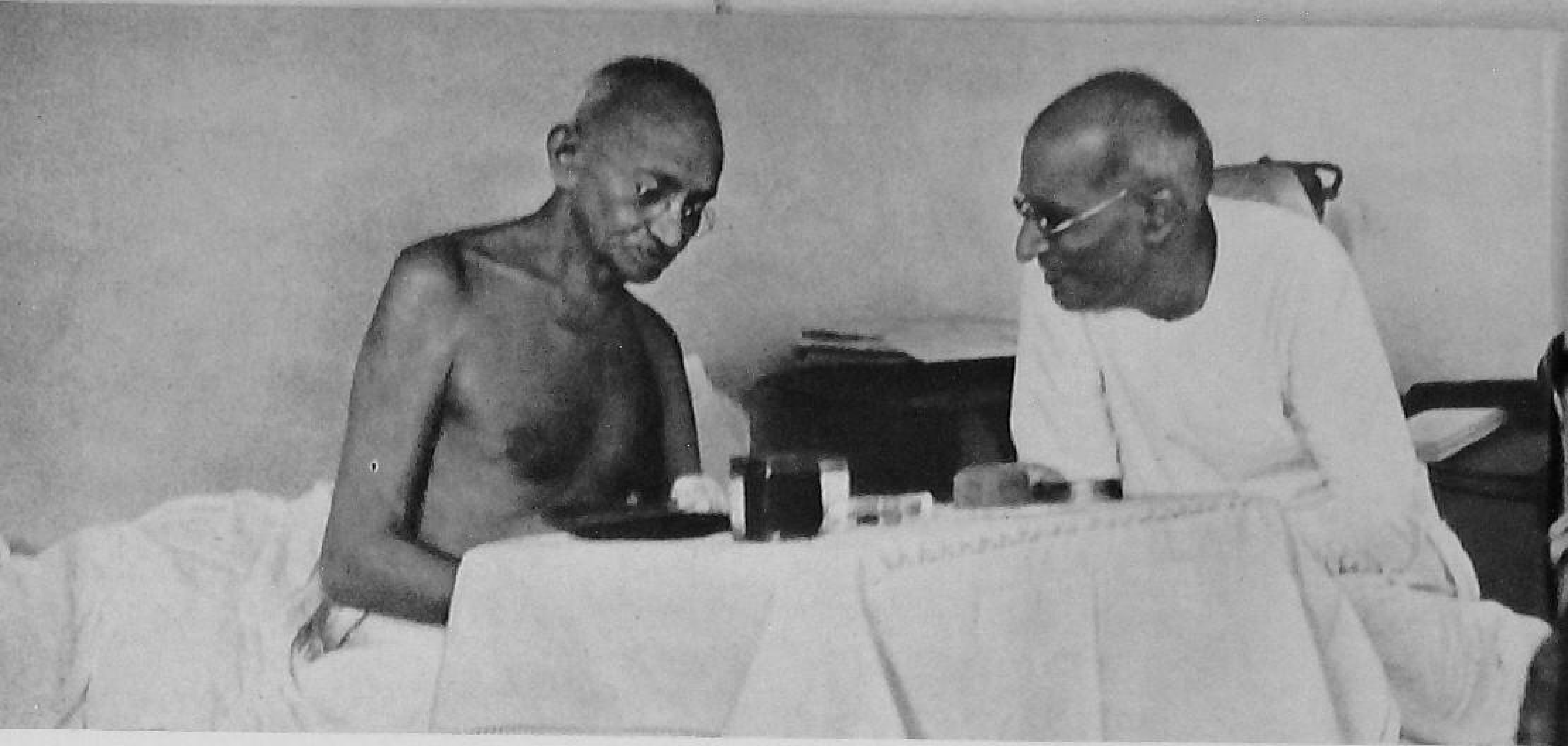
*Photographs : Kanu Gandhi*

With the Working Committee members after separation for nearly three years, Bombay, June 21, 1945



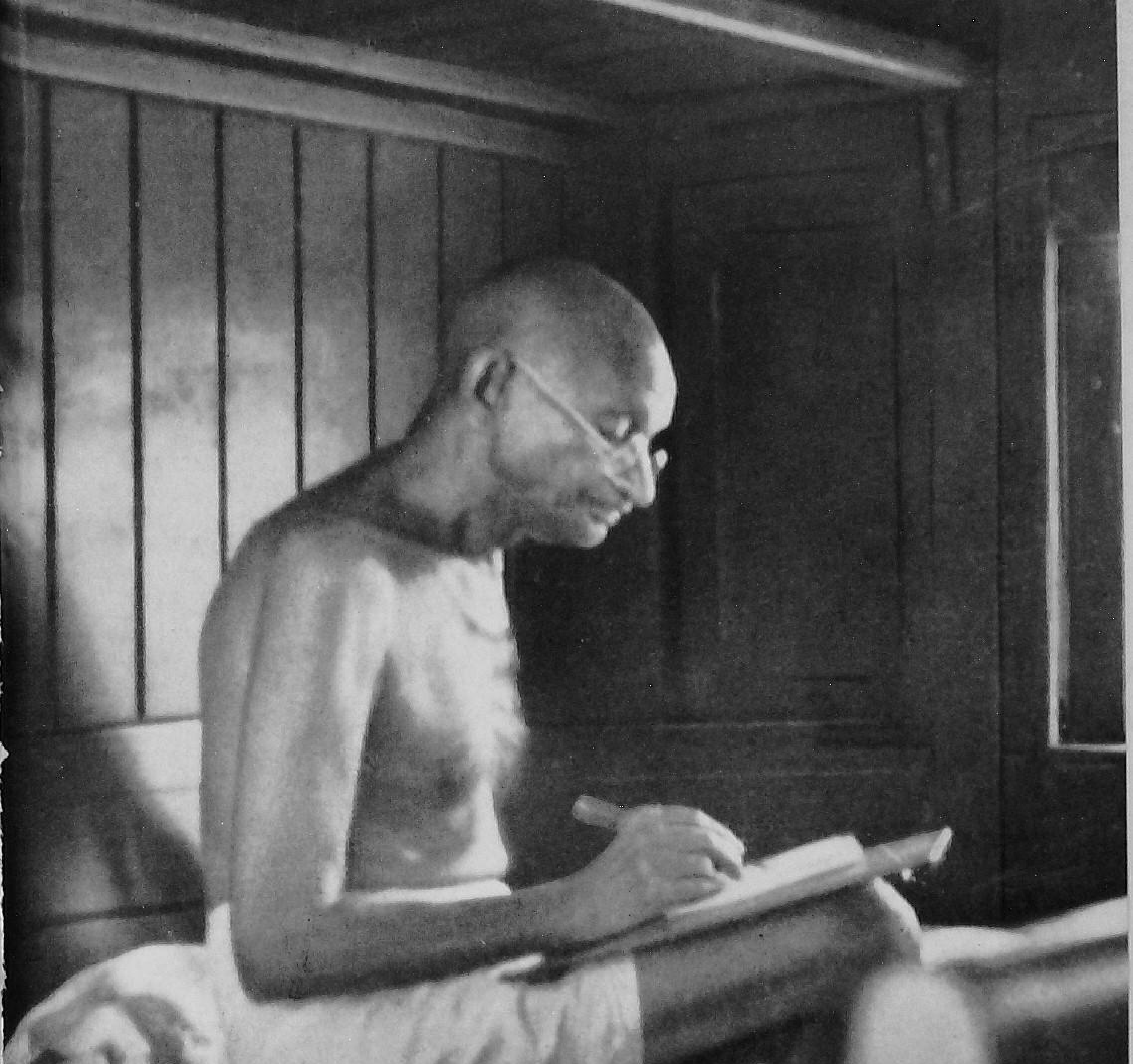
*Photograph : Kanu Gandhi*

At discussion with members of the Working Committee, Bombay, June 1945



*Photographs : Kanu Gandhi*

Discussing Lord Wavell's proposals with C. Rajagopalachari and Maulana Azad, Bombay, June 1945

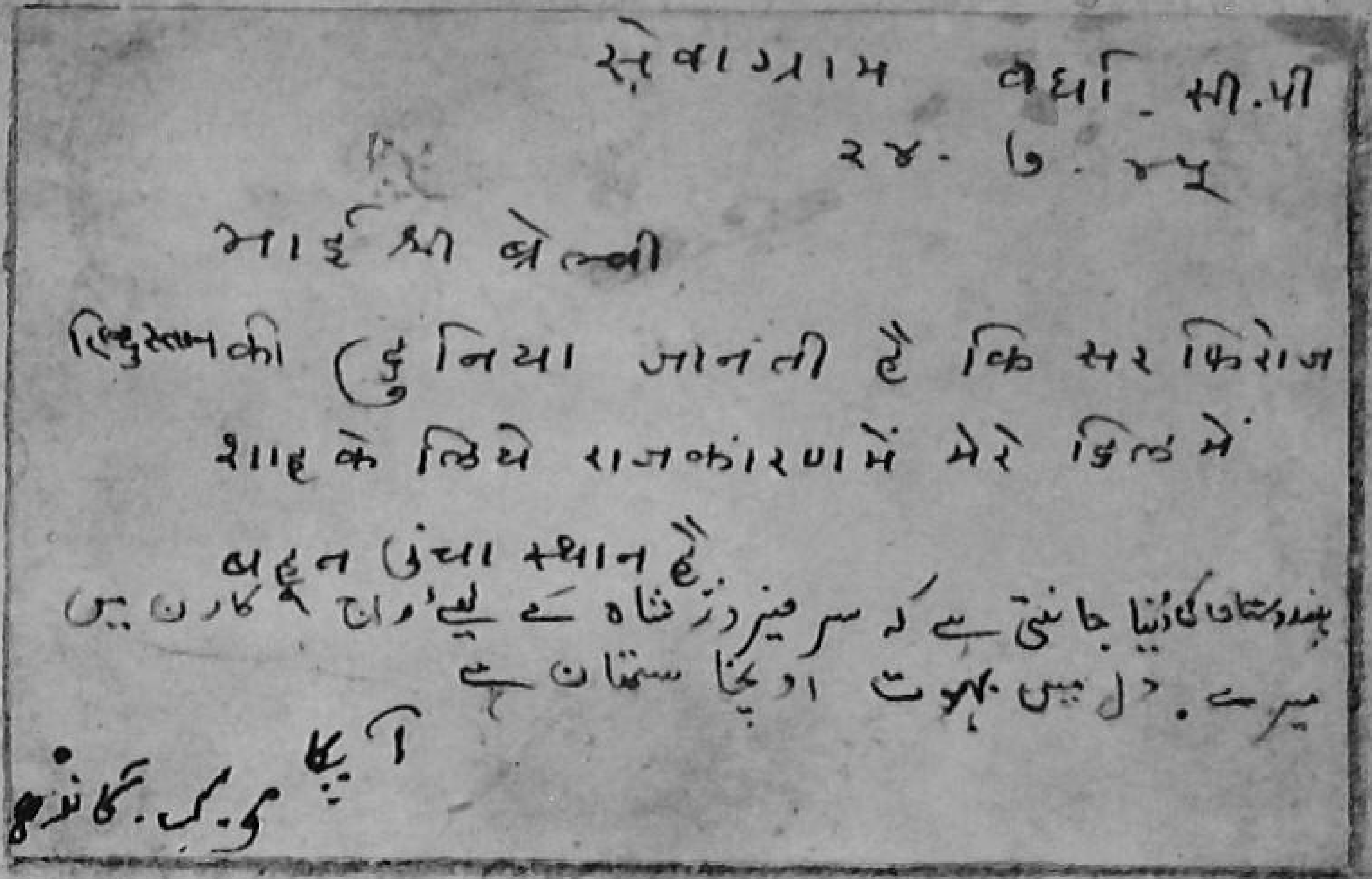


Photograph : Sunil Janah

At work on the train to Simla, June 1945

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

On the way to see the Viceroy, Simla, June 1945



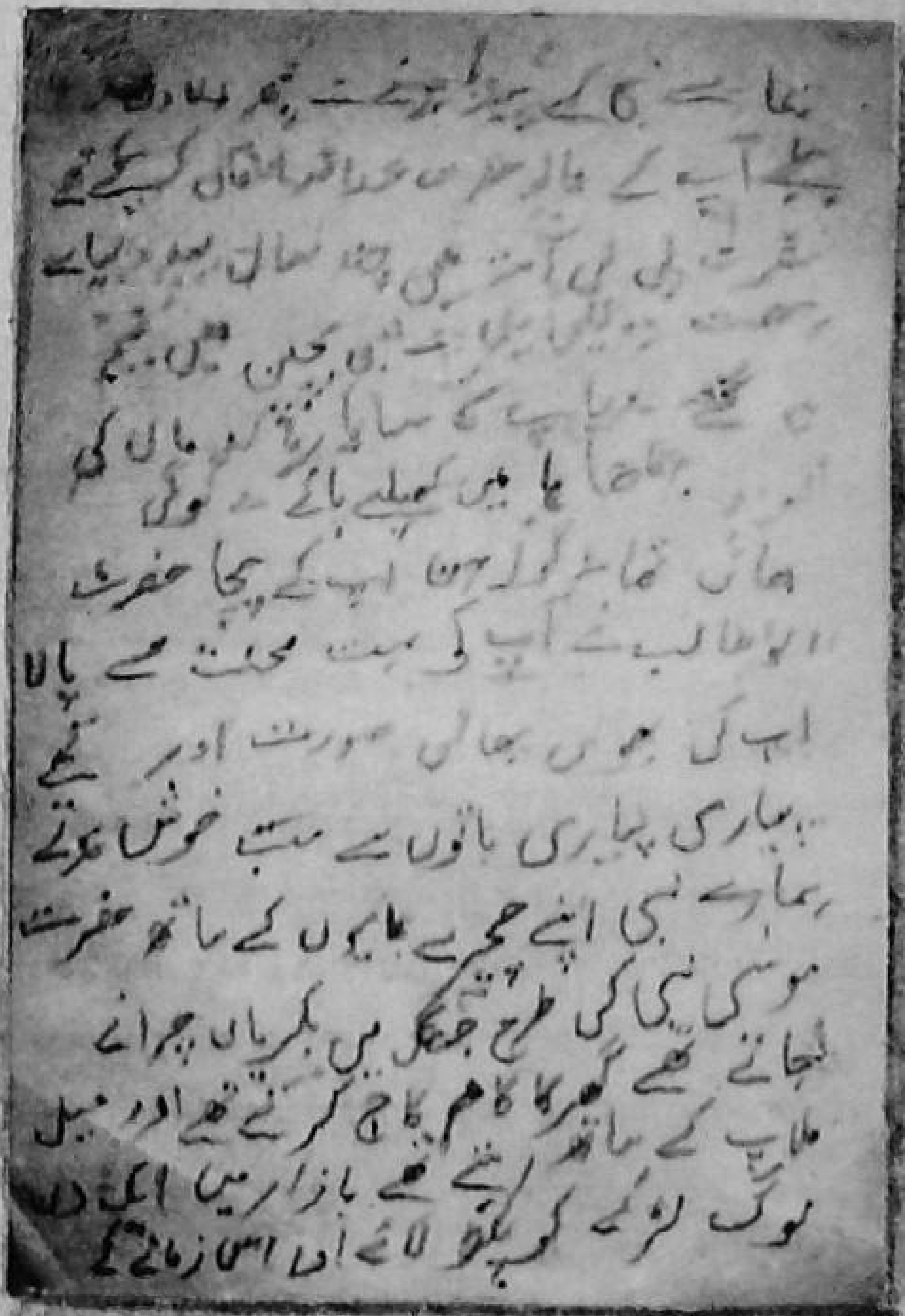
सेवाग्राम वर्धा - सी.पी.
२४. ७. ४५

भाई श्री ब्रेल्वी

हिंदुस्तान की दुनिया जानती है कि सर फिरोज शाह के लिये राजकारण में मेरे दिल में बहुत ऊंचा स्थान है

ہندوستان کی دنیا جانتی ہے کہ سر فیروز شاہ کے لیے راج کارن میں
میرے دل میں بہوت اونچا ستھان ہے

آپکا
مو. ک. گاندھی



A letter addressed to Mr. S. A. Brelvi written in both Devanagari and Urdu scripts by Gandhi, Sevagram, July 24, 1945

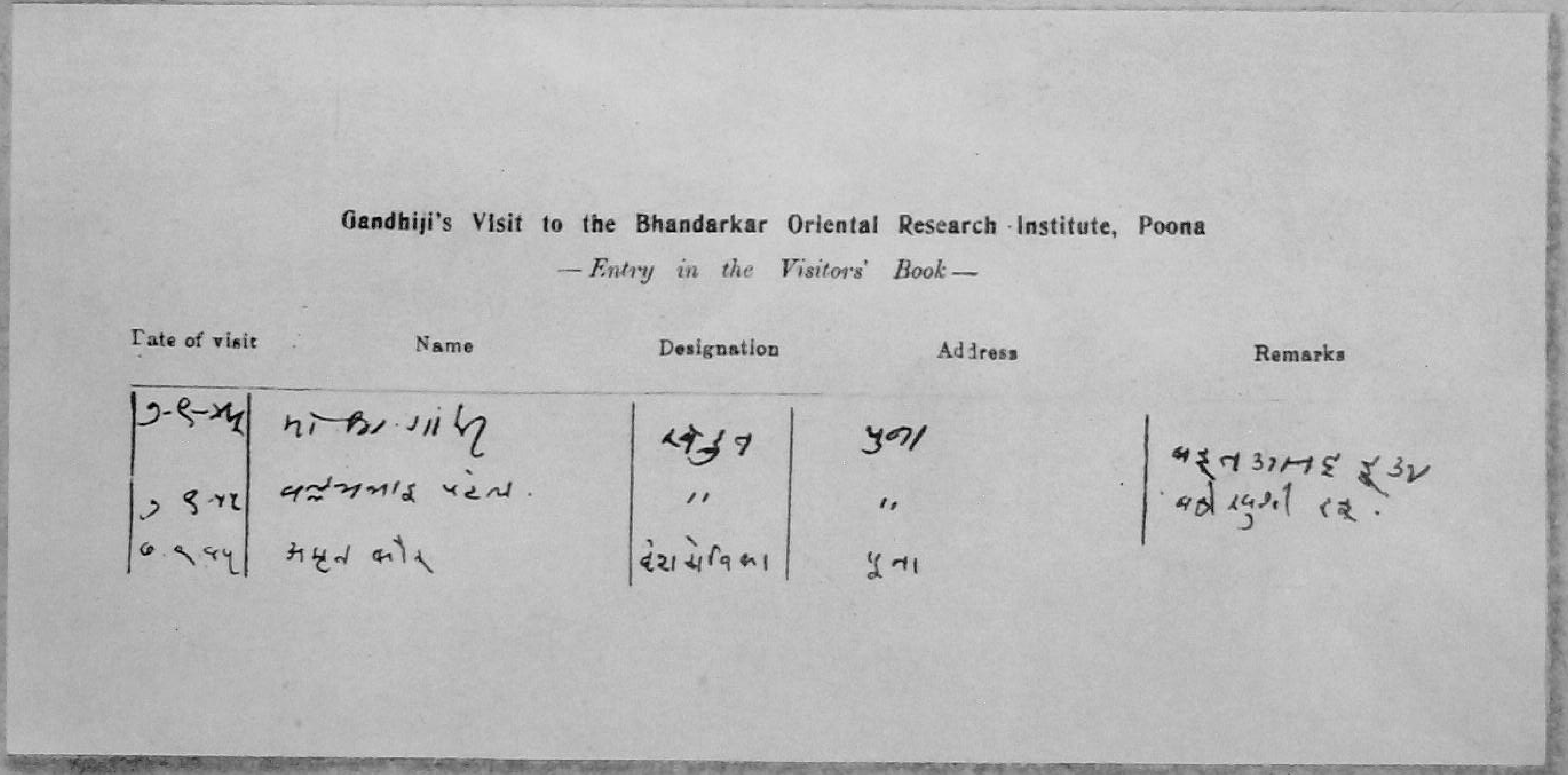
A page from a Muslim religious book copied by Gandhi

*Photograph : Babubhai Jhaveri*

Gandhi in his hut at Sevagram, July 1945

*Photograph: Kanu Gandhi*

With a child, Poona, September 1945

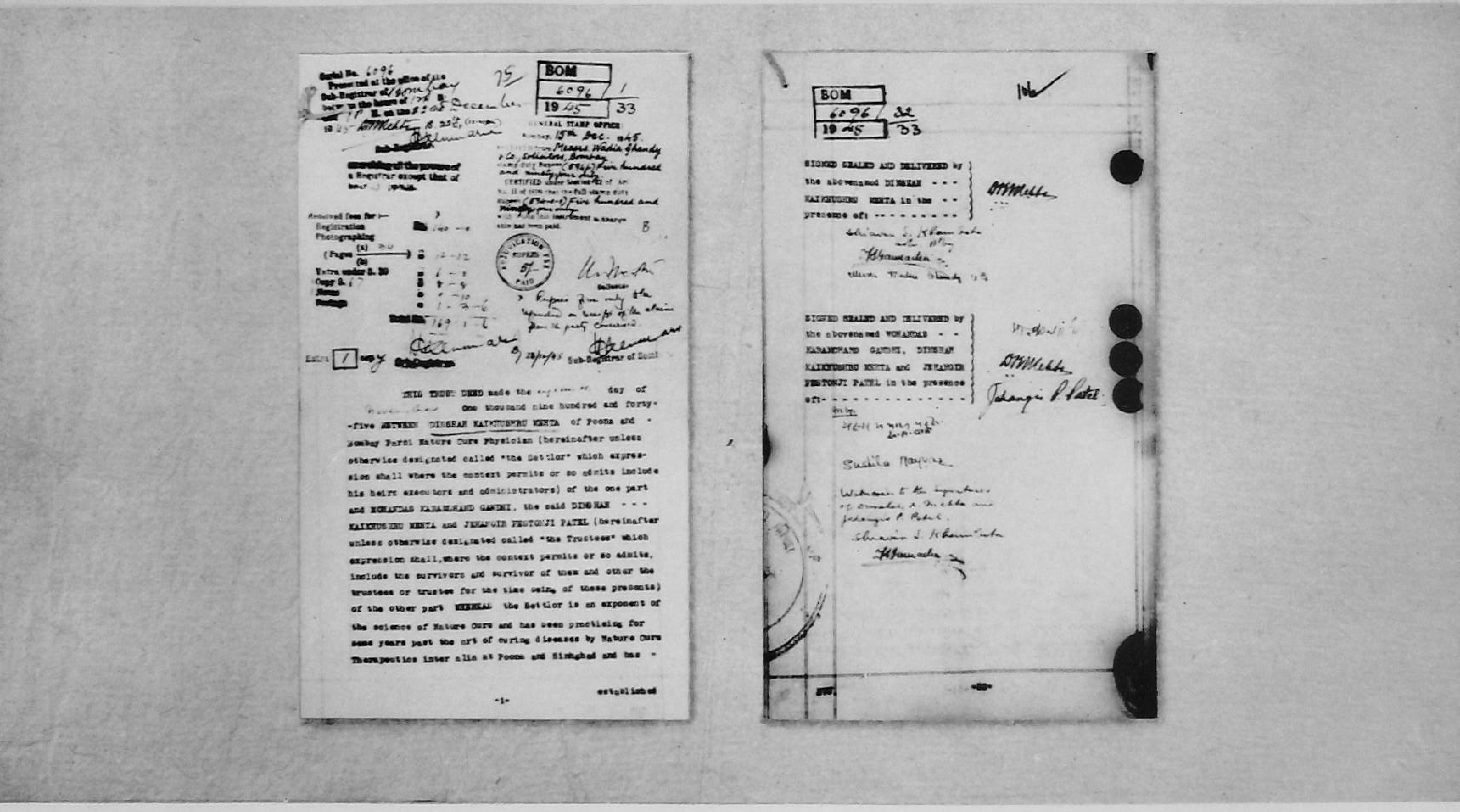



*Courtesy : Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*

A page from the visitors' book with Gandhi's remarks dated September 7, 1945: "Designation: peasant; remarks: very much pleased."

*Photographs : S. Mohite*

Opening of a public road and dispensary by Gandhi at Khadakvasala village, Poona, September 1945



THIS TRUST DEED made the ... day of November One thousand nine hundred and forty-five BETWEEN DINSHAH KAIKHUSHRU MEHTA of Poona and Bombay Parsi Nature Cure Physician (hereinafter unless otherwise designated called "the Settlor" which expression shall where the context permits or so admits include his heirs executors and administrators) of the one part and MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI, the said DINSHAH KAIKHUSHRU MEHTA and JEHANGIR PESTONJI PATEL (hereinafter unless otherwise designated called "the Trustees" which expression shall, where the context permits or so admits, include the survivors and survivor of them and other the trustees or trustee for the time being of these presents) of the other part WHEREAS the Settlor is an exponent of the science of Nature Cure and has been practising for some years past the art of curing diseases by Nature Cure Therapeutics inter alia at Poona and Sinhgad and has established

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SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED by the abovenamed DINSHAH KAIKHUSHRU MEHTA in the presence of:

SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED by the abovenamed MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI, DINSHAH KAIKHUSHRU MEHTA and JEHANGIR PESTONJI PATEL in the presence of:

Courtesy : J. P. Patel

Pages from the trust deed of Dr. Mehta's Nature Cure Clinic in Poona, November 1945

the issue of immediate transfer of power, and called on the people to respond to the call of the Congress.

Gandhi was present in most of the Working Committee meetings but he could not attend the A.-I.C.C. He was keeping indifferent health. The Congress leaders consulted him only on very important matters. The Congress affairs were in the hands of Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi went to Poona to rest at the Nature Cure Clinic.

In October, the Congress High Command issued a 12-point election manifesto. Highlights of the manifesto were: (1) The Congress stands for equal rights and opportunities for every citizen of India. (2) It stands for the unity of all communities and religious groups and for tolerance and goodwill between them. (3) It stands for full opportunities for the people, as a whole, to grow and to develop according to their own wishes and genius. (4) It stands for freedom of each group and territorial area to develop its own life and culture within the larger framework. (5) It stands for the regrouping of the provinces on a linguistic and cultural basis. (6) It stands for rights of all those suffering from social tyranny and injustice, and for the removal for them of all the barriers to equality. (7) The Congress envisages a free democratic state with the fundamental rights and liberties of all its citizens, guaranteed in its constitution. (8) The Congress stands for a federal constitution having a great deal of autonomy for its constituent units. (9) The Congress will tackle the most urgent and the vital problem of India, namely, the removal of the curse of poverty and the raising of the standard of life of the masses. (10) The Congress stands for the modernization of industry and agriculture and social control of all sources of wealth, methods of production and of distribution, so that India may grow into a co-operative commonwealth. (11) In international affairs, the Congress stands for the establishment of a federation of free nations. (12) The Congress will champion the cause of the freedom of all the subject nations and elimination of imperialism everywhere.

In November the I. N. A. trial was staged at the Red Fort, Delhi. Nehru was present in the court in his barrister's robes, which he had discarded thirty years ago. Bhulabhai Desai, the leading defence counsel, concentrated the nation's attention on the great role played by the Indian National Army under the inspiring leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose. The trial brought to light new facts, which

indicated that there was no ideological link between the I. N. A. organization and the Japanese fascism, that its primary concern was the winning of India's freedom. Bhulabhai Desai contended that it was the right of every Indian, if he so thought fit, to disclaim his allegiance to the British Crown and join an army of liberation for gaining the freedom of India. "Unless you sell your own soul," he argued, "how can you ever say that, when you are fighting to liberate your own country, there is some other allegiance, which prevents you from so doing? That means that if that happens, there is nothing but permanent slavery."

The country demanded the freedom of the I. N. A. accused and ultimately secured it. "It became a trial of strength," said Nehru, "between the will of the Indian people and the will of those who hold power in India and it was the will of people that triumphed in the end."

## *Visit To Bengal*

1945–1946

THROUGHOUT his three months' stay at the Nature Cure Clinic in Poona, Gandhi rarely left its precincts. Among his few engagements were a visit to the Bhandarkar Institute, to the Chounde Maharaj's Goshala, to the maternity home at Khadakvasala, to the Talegaon Hospital and to a tuberculosis sanatorium. A deep concern for the elementary and the much neglected human needs of the poor was at the back of these visits to the medical relief centres. At a public meeting held at Khadakvasala village, Gandhi said: "To provide facilities for a safe delivery to a few women is a poor consolation. Your success will be measured by the education you can give to the people around in maternity."

Gandhi had gone to Poona mainly for the sake of Vallabhbhai Patel who needed nature cure treatment. Before leaving Poona, he assembled all the workers of Dr. Dinshah Mehta's clinic and announced that from the 1st of January 1946, the clinic would be run for the sake of the poor and in a style befitting the poor. Were they prepared to serve the poor with the same care and attention that they bestowed upon their rich patients? Since the institution would be shorn of the many of the amenities, which were associated with the present regime, but which would be unwarrantable luxuries in an institution meant for the poor, they would have to be more punctilious in other things which mattered, such as, cleanliness, punctuality, a meticulous consideration and deep sympathy for the patients who would come under their care. The trust deed of the clinic was executed there and then.

Gandhi returned to Sevagram on November 21, 1945, much refreshed. The working of the recent khadi policy was giving rise to some intricate practical problems. They claimed the attention of the executive committee of the Charkha Sangh which met at Sevagram on November 27 under the guidance of Gandhi. It enabled him to

explain in detail his conception of the future khadi work. Under the new policy, the goal of khadi was not merely to provide economic relief, but attainment of swaraj through truthful and non-violent means; it was ruled that no one who was directly connected with the mill-cloth industry or trade should be eligible as a trustee of a certified khadi bhandar.

Another question that was discussed was whether khadi bhandars should be permitted to stock and deal in other village industries besides khadi. A fear was expressed by some of the members that, as a result of the possible growing difficulty in the clearing of khadi stocks, khadi bhandars might be tempted to devote more and more attention to the sale of fancy products or village industries, to cut their losses and keep the bhandar going. The bhandar might thus become a khadi bhandar merely in name. But Gandhi discounted the suggestion. "There was a time," he explained, "when we used to measure the success of khadi work in terms of the production and sale figures of khadi. Khadi bhandars were agencies for pushing khadi sales and clearing accumulated khadi stocks. But now, I am indifferent about these figures. The function of the khadi bhandar hereafter must be mainly educative. The manager of the bhandar, as I envisage his function, will not try to tempt customers to purchase khadi by dint of his salesmanship. He will simply sit in his bhandar and ply his *takli*. He will explain to the customers the meaning and the implications of this new khadi policy and will provide facilities for teaching them spinning, carding and the allied processes in the bhandar itself. Rules could be framed to insure that the capital meant for khadi was not locked up in other village products and that the latter did not oust the former. But the only real and reliable guarantee for khadi would be the honesty, truthfulness and sincerity of the khadi workers."

This introduced the question as to whether the existing khadi bhandars in the cities, for example, the Kalbadevi Khadi Bhandar in Bombay, should not be closed, and if not, what should be their future shape. Gandhi was of the opinion that the Kalbadevi Khadi Bhandar should continue for the present as a clearing house for the surplus khadi stock but it need not be maintained in the present locality: "I would like us to acquire an extensive plot of land in Dadar, Bandra or some other suburb in healthy and agreeable surroundings and establish our khadi bhandar there. I would induce

a variety of artisans and craftsmen to settle there, and our khadi workers too and, in fact, convert the site into a tiny, model village which would serve as a living museum of resuscitated village crafts. In older days, the East India Company's factory, on the banks of the Tapti river, commanded the entire countryside round about Surat and the city of Surat itself. Your khadi bhandar will be your factory with this difference, that the function of the former was to extirpate khadi and our indigenous village crafts. Your mission will be to revive and renovate them. You will become village-minded yourselves and try to produce all the village products in the simple villager's way. You will make your establishment a centre of attraction to the city folk who will come there for their week-end, instead of going to fashionable pleasure resorts. Those who want to buy khadi will come there and not only make their khadi purchases but get an experience too of the joy and satisfaction of simple, healthy village life in ideal village surroundings, besides learning spinning, carding, etc., if they do not know them already."

At the end of November, Gandhi left for Calcutta. Within a few hours of his arrival in the city, on December 1, he had an interview with Mr. Casey, the Governor of Bengal. Making a speech earlier at the prayer meeting held at the Sodepur ashram, Gandhi said that he had not come to Bengal to take part in the politics of Bengal or the forthcoming elections. But he had come purely to offer what consolation his presence in the midst of the people of Bengal could to the victims of the famine and to do whatever he could to relieve their distress.

Ever since he was released from jail, he had been anxious to visit Bengal, but he could not do it owing to his illness. Moreover, he did not want to visit Bengal, unless he was certain that the authorities would welcome his visit and that no restrictions would be put upon his movements. He was not prepared to submit to any restrictive order on the one hand, or, on the other, to offer civil disobedience against such orders under the conditions prevailing in the country. Even after the way for his visit to Bengal was cleared, the visit had to be postponed on account of Sardar Patel requiring nature cure treatment and needing his presence by his side. He was very glad that he had been able to come to Bengal after all.

Appealing to the audience to contribute their mite to the Harijan Fund, Gandhi revealed that in this way he had collected at least

two lakhs and a half of rupees for the Harijans, since his release. Contribution to the Harijan Fund was a token of their sympathy with the cause of the abolition of untouchability.

Gandhi concluded his speech by referring to his attempt, as early as 1914, when he was in England, to learn Bengali. He made some progress in it, but he could not keep up his studies. It had been his ambition to speak to the people of Bengal in Bengali, so that he might be able to penetrate their hearts. He was sorry that he could not do so on the present occasion. He was of the opinion that no Indian could call himself a full citizen, unless he could speak to the people of the various provinces in their tongues. Failing that, it was the duty of every Indian to learn at least Hindustani, which alone could be their *rashtrabhasha*.

During the first week of December, Gandhi had a series of talks with the Governor of Bengal. This was a prelude to the interview between the Viceroy and Gandhi on the political situation in India. On December 10, Lord Wavell received Gandhi. In his address to the Associated Chambers, the Viceroy gave some indication of his policy. India's problem was not a simple one, he declared. It could not and would not be solved by repeating a password or formula. "Quit India" would not act as the magic "sesame" which opened Ali Baba's cave. It could not and would not be solved by violence. Disorder and violence were in fact the one thing that might check the pace of India's progress. There were various other parties to the settlement, who must somehow or other reach a measure of agreement amongst themselves, the Congress—the largest political party in India—the minorities, of whom the Musalmans were the most numerous and the most important, the rulers of Indian states and the British Government.

A meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress was held in Calcutta on December 7. The committee dealt with a number of important questions and, before concluding the session on the 11th, it passed a comprehensive resolution drafted by Gandhi, affirming the Congress creed of non-violence:

"After the arrest of the principal Congressmen in the August of 1942, the unguided masses took the reins in their own hands and acted almost spontaneously. If many acts of heroism and sacrifice are to their credit, there were acts which could not be included in non-violence. It is, therefore, necessary for the Congress Working

Committee to affirm for the guidance of all concerned that the policy of non-violence adopted in 1920 by the Congress continues unabated and that such non-violence does not include burning of public property, cutting of the telegraph wires, derailing the trains and intimidation.

"The Working Committee are of opinion that the policy of non-violence as detailed in the Congress resolution of 1920, since expanded and explained from time to time, and action in accordance with it, has raised India to a height never attained before.

"The Working Committee are further of opinion that constructive activities of the Congress, beginning with the spinning wheel and khadi as the centre, are emblematic of the policy of non-violence and that every other Congress activity, including what is known as parliamentary programme, is subservient to and designed to promote the constructive activities as explained by Gandhiji.

"The Working Committee are of opinion that civil disobedience, mass or any other, meant for the attainment of freedom is inconceivable without the adoption of the constructive programme on the widest scale possible by the masses of India."

Closely connected with the reaffirmation of the Congress creed of non-violence was the passing of a resolution on the Indian National Army or Azad Hind Fouj:

"Whilst the Congress must feel proud of the sacrifice and discipline, patriotism, bravery and the spirit of unity displayed by the Azad Hind Fouj, organized as an independent force in the foreign countries under unprecedented conditions by Shri Subhas Chandra Bose, and whilst it is right and proper for the Congress to defend the members of that body, now undergoing trial, and also to aid its sufferers, the Congressmen must not forget that this support and sympathy do not mean that the Congress has in any way deviated from its policy of attaining independence by peaceful and legitimate means."

The Working Committee took a disciplinary action against the communist members of the A.-I.C.C. Their names were removed and similar steps were proposed to the subordinate Congress committees to purge the communists from the Congress organization for their anti-national activities during the '42 struggle.

The Working Committee meeting over, he left for Santiniketan on December 18. From the Bolpur station, he was driven straight

to the prayer ground, where all the inmates of Santiniketan had assembled for the evening prayer. Gandhi gave a short discourse in the course of which he likened Gurudev to a parent bird with outspread wings brooding over its nest: "Under the warmth of his wings, Santiniketan has been nurtured to its present size. Bengal is full of his songs. He has glorified the name of India throughout the world not by his songs only, but also by his pen and brush. We all miss the warmth of his protecting wings. But we must not grieve. The remedy lies in our own hands."

"True monuments to the great," he continued, "are not statues of marble or bronze or gold. The best monument is to adorn and to enlarge their legacy. A son who buries underground his father's legacy, or wastes it, will be adjudged unworthy of his inheritance. All mortals must quit this world one day. Gurudev has gone, having achieved all that a human being can expect to in life. His soul now rests in peace. It is for you, now, the workers and the inmates of Santiniketan—as indeed all those who are imbued with Gurudev's spirit—collectively to represent his ideal."

The next day was Wednesday, the day of Gurudev's weekly discourse. Gandhi addressing the assemblage further amplified his previous day's message.

He had noticed that during the prayer some of the students did not sit erect. Some were fidgety, others listless. He pulled them up for this as he had done on the previous evening. "The boys and girls of this institution should carry the imprimatur of Santiniketan in the littlest of their little acts," he observed. "The war has ended, but peace has not come upon earth. It has only meant the triumph of the allied arms over the Axis powers. The world is in a conflagration of unrest. Millions in Europe today are faced with the grim prospect of death due to starvation and cold, during the winter. And nearer at home, in Bengal, things have been no better. It was Gurudev's mission to deliver the message of peace to an aching world. The boys and girls of Santiniketan should go forth into the world as warriors of peace in fact, as it is in name. This requires that you should have a living faith in God. As a piece of marble becomes the vehicle of the sculptor's genius, so must the spirit of Gurudev live and propagate through you."

On the 19th, Gandhi performed the foundation-laying ceremony of the Deenbandhu Memorial Hospital. The auspicious mark on his

forehead on this occasion was put by two Santals, one of them a woman. Equally happy was the choice of the song from *Gitanjali* that was sung: "Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet, where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost."

A note of grim stoicism rang through Gandhi's speech. Andrews, he said, whom the people of India had affectionately given the title of Deenbandhu, in grateful recognition of his championship of the cause of the poor and the downtrodden, had been like a blood brother to him and yet he could not grieve over his death: "Birth and death are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. They are not distinct. They are different aspects of the same thing. But out of our ignorance, we welcome the one and shrink from the other. This is wrong. Mourning over the death of the dear ones, especially those like Charlie Andrews and Gurudev who have done their part so nobly and well, has its roots in our selfishness. Deenbandhu is blessed in death, as he was in life. Death of people like him cannot be an occasion for sorrow. Speaking for myself, I may say that I have almost forgotten to mourn the death of friends and dear ones and I want you to learn to do likewise."

In the evening, the heads of the various departments met Gandhi in an informal conference to place their difficulties before him and to seek his guidance. Gandhi asked them not to hesitate to tell him if the institution had fallen from the ideals which Tagore had put before them. "Regard me as a blank slate," he said. "So far, I have had only hearsay, and hearsay has very little place in my life. Solid facts are what I want. Without a full knowledge of facts, I shall be able to do little to help you."

Noticing some hesitation on their part, he resumed: "It is not that you have nothing to say. That would mean that the institution is perfect. But nothing in this world is perfect. Speak to me freely about the shortcomings. Good things speak for themselves, not the bad things, at any rate, not to me."

Nandalal Bose broke the ice. The number of the students in his department had been steadily increasing. Kala-Bhavan had begun as a studio, but had now become a teaching institute. Teaching and administrative work made heavy inroads upon his time and the art suffered. The chief difficulty was to find a suitable successor who would command the willing allegiance of his colleagues and at the same time worthily represent the spirit of the institution.

Several other difficulties were then mentioned. Rathi Babu spoke about the finances. Kshiti Babu complained that the young men of promise, who came to Santiniketan for training, were lured away by the prospect of distinction and remuneration, when the training was complete. Anil Babu complained that university department of Visva-Bharati had queered their pitch. Bibhutibhushan Gupta mentioned the complication arising from the admission of the day-scholars. Krishna Kripalani voiced the dilemma of the whole group when he complained that they felt like the crew of a vessel without the helmsman. "We have no clear conception as to whither we are drifting, what we want to be."

After they had all finished, Gandhi began:

"As I listened, while Nanda Babu and Kshiti Mohan Babu were speaking, I said to myself: 'Here is a difficulty but it is a difficulty of our own making.' If a person conducts a big department, he is expected to transmit what he stands for to some one who can be termed as his successor. Yet it is the dominant cry of these two stalwarts that they are unable to find a suitable successor for their departments. True, these are departments of a special character. I know these departments and I know too Gurudev's views about them. Speaking generally, may I venture to suggest that there is no difficulty but can be overcome by *tapascharya*? It is almost an untranslatable word, the nearest approach to its true meaning being, perhaps, 'single-minded devotion'. But, it means also much more than that. Whenever, in the course of my multifarious activities, I have been confronted with a difficulty of this character, this single-minded devotion has solved my difficulty in a manner which I had never expected. During my twenty long years in the god-forsaken South Africa, where, under circumstances of the worst kind conceivable, I found my God, it was my invariable experience that the right helper appeared at the right moment.

"It is my conviction, which I arrived at after a long and laborious struggle, that Gurudev, as a person, was much superior to his work or even this institution, where he soared and sang. He poured his whole soul into it and nurtured it with his life's blood, and yet, I dare say that his greatness was not fully expressed by it or through it. It is perhaps true of all great and good men—they are better and greater than their works. If, then, you are to represent that goodness or greatness for which Gurudev stands, but which he could

not express fully even through this institution, you can do it only through *tapascharya*.

"There is a remarkable string of verses in the Tulsi Ramayan to the effect that, what is not possible through other means becomes possible through *tapascharya*. This is said with reference to Parvati. Narada had prophesied that she would have for her companion-in-life one who answered to the description of Shiva. If instead of Shiva, those characteristics were met in the person of a rogue, her life would be ruined. How to avert such a calamity was the problem and it is in that context that the verses to which I have referred come. I commend these verses to you for your careful perusal. Only you will have to strip them of their orthodoxy.

"Finances were mentioned by you in the course of discussion. I will plead with you to dismiss from your thoughts the word 'finance' altogether. I am convinced that lack of finances never represented a real difficulty to a sincere worker. Finances follow, they dog your footsteps, if you represent a real cause. Here, let me utter a warning. A worker may be real and yet the cause he represents may not be real. His handicap in that case will continue. There are, of course, seeming exceptions. The world is full of fools and successful rogues. But speaking of sincere men and women, it is my firm faith that, if their cause is as worthy as their means, the handicap of finance need never deter them or damp their ardour. It is a big thing you have undertaken and in future you may have to undertake still bigger things and the question will be raised, 'What about the finances?' I would plead with you in that event not to waste a thought on finances and you will find that the difficulty lies somewhere else, rather than in the lack of finances. Set it right, and the finances will take care of themselves."

To Bibhutibhusan Gupta, he said: "Yours is a common difficulty. You cannot ride two horses at the same time. If you mix the day-scholars with the full-time students, the former will overshadow and spoil the training of the latter. Your institution was not designed for the mixture."

"Then, it was said by Krishna Kripalani," continued Gandhi, "that they did not know what they were aiming at or stood for, what the sum-total of the energies of Santiniketan and Sriniketan signified. My answer is that the ideal before you is not to represent Bengal or even India; you have to represent the whole world.

Gurudev's claim was not smaller than that. He stood for humanity as a whole. He could not do that, unless he represented India with its destitute, dumb millions. That should be your aspiration as well. Unless you represent the mass mind of India, you will not represent Gurudev as a man. You may represent Gurudev, and history will say of him that his institution was a failure. I do not want history to give that verdict."

The discussion was resumed on the next day, when Gandhi had a meeting with the members of the staff of various departments. Just as he was preparing to leave, Indira Devi put a question: "Is there not too much music and dancing here? Is there not the danger of the music of the voice drowning the music of life?" Gandhi had no time to answer the question then. Much as he would have loved to prolong his stay in Santiniketan, the mission which had brought him in Bengal peremptorily called him back to Calcutta. Reluctantly he took leave and boarded the car that was waiting for him. But his thoughts continued to linger on the scene, he had left behind. From Calcutta, Gandhi wrote answering Indira Devi's question, as also some other questions that had been posed but which he had not the time to answer:

"I have a suspicion that, perhaps, there is more of music than is warranted by life, or I will put the thought in another way. The music of life is in danger of being lost in the music of the voice. Why not the music of the walk, of the march, of every movement of ours and of every activity? It was not an idle remark which I made at the *mandir* service about the way in which the boys and girls were sitting anyhow in the *mandir*. I think that our boys and girls should know how to walk, how to march, how to sit, how to eat, in short, how to perform every function of life. That is my idea of music. So far as I know, Gurudev stood for all this in his own person.

"Music in Santiniketan is charming, but has the professor there come to the conclusion that Bengali music is the last word in that direction? Has Hindustani music, music before and after the Muslim period, anything to give to the world of music? If it has, it should have its due place at Santiniketan. Indeed, I would go so far as to say, that the western music which has made immense strides should also blend with the Indian music. Visva-Bharati is conceived as a world university. This is merely a passing thought of a layman to be transmitted to the music master there."

"I do not like preparing the boys and girls for university examination," Gandhi observed. "Visva-Bharati is its own university. It ought not to be in need of a charter from any government. As it is, you are giving Visva-Bharati degrees, side by side with preparing students for the chartered university. You have a high ideal to live for and live up to. University degrees are a lure to which you cannot afford to fall a prey. Concessions that Gurudev made to weakness with impunity, Visva-Bharati without him cannot make. Concession to weakness began with the introduction of the orthodox matriculation examination. I was unable even then to reconcile myself to it and I don't know that we have gained anything by it. I am not now thinking at all in terms of non-co-operation. I am just now anxious for Santiniketan to represent the highest that Gurudev stood for."

"You will not have real rural reconstruction," he added, "unless you begin with the basic craft, which is hand-spinning. The weaver's art without hand-spinning is a dead art. You know that I pleaded for it with Gurudev; at first in vain, later on he had begun to see what I was driving at. If you think that I have interpreted Gurudev aright in the matter of hand-spinning, you will not hesitate to make Santiniketan hum with the music of the wheel."

On December 20, Gandhi reached Calcutta to resume his talks with the Governor of Bengal. On the 23rd, he replied to questions put by some workers who had assembled at Sodepur. One woman worker wanted to know, when the remaining prisoners would be released. Gandhi said he had naturally discussed with the Governor many questions, but could not allow himself to be cross-examined. He could only hope with those present that, if they were on the eve of liberty, these so-called prisoners must be set free sooner, rather than later. But he warned the questioner not to worry about them, if she believed with him that prisons for patriots were gateways to liberty. Was not India in bondage one vast prison?

Gandhi left Sodepur on the night of 24th of December, reaching Mahishadal the next day. Crowds had gathered along the Hooghly river and canal bank to catch glimpse of Gandhi who sat on the top deck of a special launch. He stayed in Mahishadal for four days and addressed fifty to sixty thousand people attending the evening prayer meetings from nearby villages.

Midnapore district in which Mahishadal is situated had played a heroic role in the '42 struggle. A national government in full sense

of the term had functioned there for a couple of years. Of all places in Bengal, Gandhi chose to visit only Midnapore district, for it had gone through the worst ordeal of the police and military repression, and cyclone and famine.

In a report which the workers of Midnapore submitted to him, they described how, during the August upheaval, the people had captured *thanas*, burnt down courts, paralysed communications, organized a parallel police force, intelligence branch and law courts where the delinquents and those engaged in anti-social activities were dealt with "according to law". They had scrupulously avoided taking of life, and had, therefore, acted non-violently.

Later they discussed the question of a parallel government and sabotage. "I cannot say," remarked Gandhi, "that all that has been done has been well done or ought to have been done. On the contrary, much of it ought not to have been done. That the people did not remain inert is a matter of satisfaction, but the fact that, after all these years, they should not have known what the Congress stood for is a matter for sorrow. What they did was thoughtless. By its very nature, it could not be sustained." He continued:

"You have graphically put in your reports how you blew up a railway track, put a road out of use, burnt a court, seized a *thana*, set up a parallel government and so on. This is not the technique of non-violent action. People committed the mistake of thinking that all that did not involve killing was non-violence. Sometimes killing is the cleanest part of violence. If you kill the mischief-maker outright, there is an end to it, as far as he is concerned, but harassment is worse. It did not put out mischief. On the contrary, it brought the mischief on our own heads. The authorities became vindictive. Perhaps you will say that they would have been vindictive anyhow but that is not what we should desire or aim at. It does not pay us to let them go into a panic.

"In August '42, the authorities became panicky. We gave them that excuse. But they are a people who do not know what defeat is; their cowardice is not fundamental. So, they let such things as the *thanas*, panchayat courts, etc., remain in your hands, for a short while, as toys, but as soon as they had completed their dispositions they turned the full blast of their machinery of retaliation against us. It is not in this way that India will attain her independence. We cannot afford to repeat it.

"Today you have to reckon not with Britain alone, but the Big Three. You cannot successfully fight them with their own weapons. After all, you can't go beyond the atom bomb. Unless we can have a new way of fighting imperialism of all brands, in the place of the outworn one of a violent rising, there is no hope for the oppressed races of the earth."

"Let nobody be misled by the Russian parallel," he added. "Our tradition is wholly different from Russia's. The historical setting is different. In Russia, the whole population was under arms; Indian masses won't take to arms, even if they could be given the necessary training. But it is useless to think that our rulers will let us give them that training, when they have at a stroke disarmed a first-rate military state like Japan. Today, Japan lies prostrate at the conqueror's feet. But non-violence knows no defeat. It must, however, be true non-violence, not a make-believe. I would not shed a single tear, if I alone were left to represent such non-violence."

"After all that we have done and have suffered, we have begun to doubt whether our energies have flown in the right channel, whether the mass awakening was not misdirected. But, is not non-violent rebellion, a programme of seizure of power?" they asked.

"Therein lies the fallacy," replied Gandhi. "A non-violent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power'. It is a programme of transformation of relationships, ending in a peaceful transfer of power. If people had fully carried out the five steps outlined by me in my 8th of August speech in the A.-I.C.C. in Bombay, and had there been a perfect atmosphere of non-violence, the Government's power of repression would have been sterilized and it would have been compelled to yield to the national demand.

"If under the impact of the foreign invasion or some such cause, the ruling power abdicates and a vacuum is created, the people's organization will naturally take over its functions, but such *Jatiya Sarkar* would have no other sanction except that of non-violence and service of the people to enforce its fiats. It will never use coercion. Even those who might hold contrary views will receive a full measure of security under it."

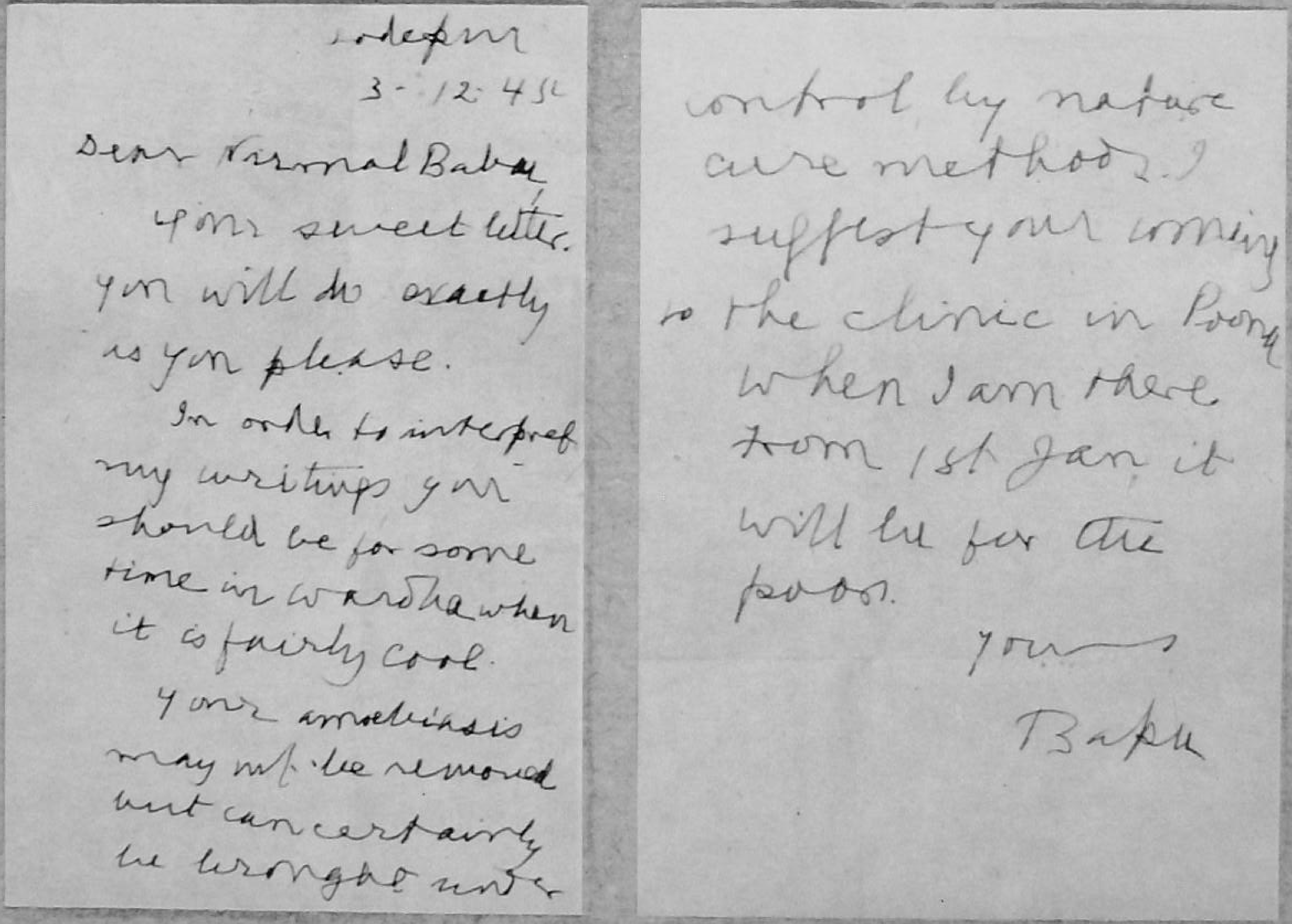
As an instance, he mentioned the case of Bardoli. In Midnapore whilst they succeeded in capturing a few symbols of power in the initial stages, they could not retain the fruits of their success. But, in Bardoli, the satyagrahis were able fully to retain the gains of their

struggle. "Moreover, you have seen," observed Gandhi, "that all your bravery could not prevent the violation of women. Now, that is intolerable. No one should be able to cast an evil eye upon them. This requires inculcation of a higher form of bravery, that of non-violence, which can hurl defiance at death and against which the power of the aggressor can't prevail. This is what I am trying to do. It may take time. It takes a long time to infuse this kind of higher courage among the millions. Whether this kind of non-violence will ever come into play or not, I do not know. But you, who have had a training in non-violence for all these years, ought to realize that in your hands non-violence should show all the brilliance that is inherent in it."

On the night of December 29, Gandhi met about two hundred men and women of Mahishadal and the nearby villages. They included the local workers and victims of police and military atrocities during the '42 struggle. Gandhi invited questions. The first question was whether they were expected to remain non-violent even in the face of their women being dishonoured. They believed in suffering for swaraj. They also believed that any departure from non-violence would delay the coming of swaraj. Then, what could they do in cases of molestation of their womenfolk?

Gandhi said that he had been asked the same question in 1920 and 1921, and he could only repeat the reply which he gave then. The question betrayed ignorance of non-violence and also of swaraj of his conception. He did not want swaraj at the cost of women's honour. If what passed as non-violence did not enable people to protect the honour of the women, or if it did not enable the women to protect their honour, it was not non-violence. "Believe me, it is something quite different," and he described what he had written in *Hind Swaraj* in 1909. He said that experience had added force to the argument. "After all who protected Sita from Ravan? The poet tells us that her purity was such that Ravan dared not compass his end without her consent."

He warned them that if anybody came to him with the plea that he could not protect the honour of women because he had taken the vow of non-violence, he would give them no quarter. Non-violence should never be used as a shield for cowardice. It was a weapon of the brave. He would rather they died fighting violently than became helpless witnesses to such atrocities. For, a truly non-violent



Sodepur
3-12-45

Dear Nirmal Babu,

Your sweet letter. You will do exactly as you please.

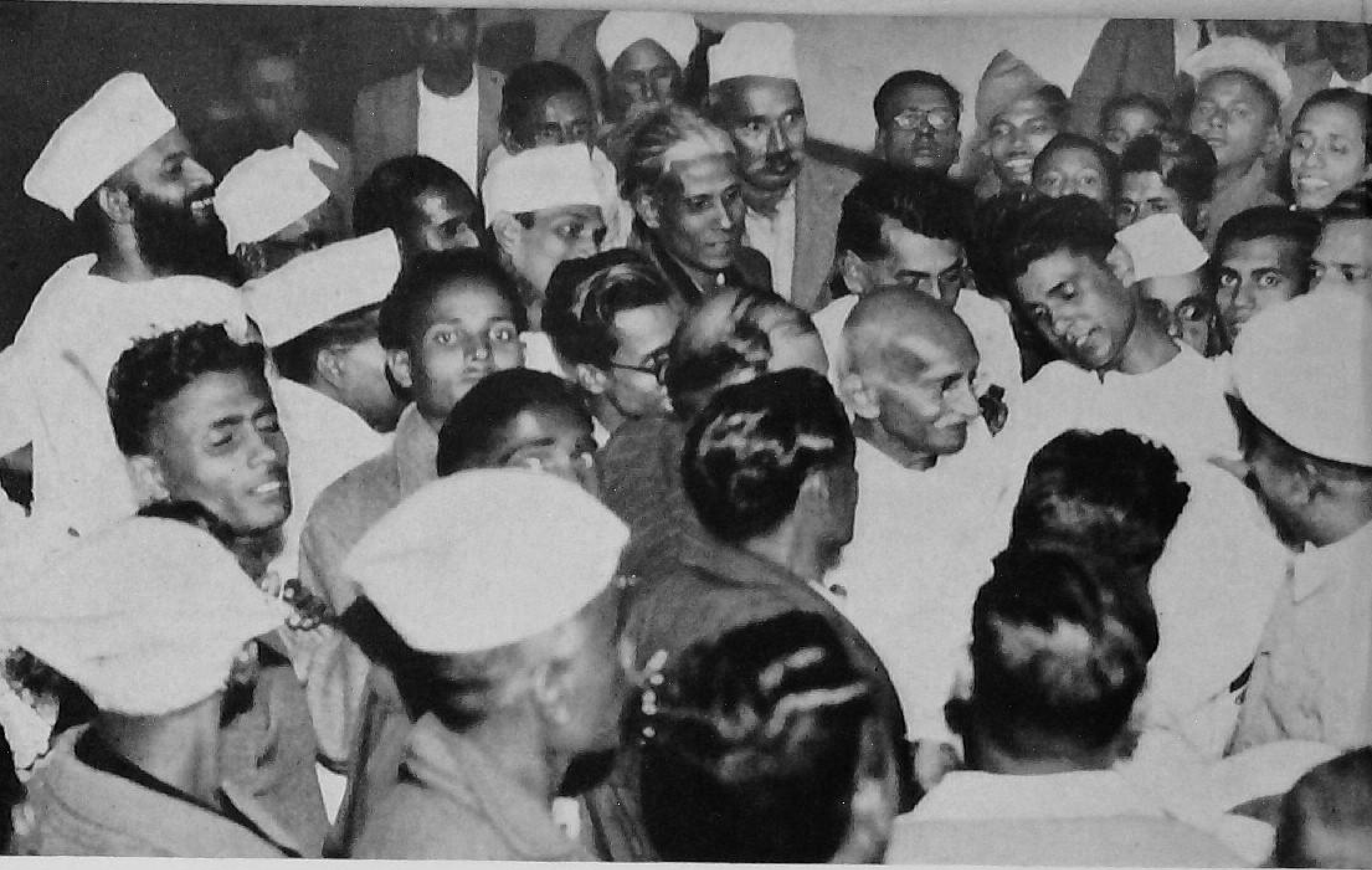
In order to interpret my writings you should be for some time in Wardha when it is fairly cool.

Your amoebiasis may not be removed but can certainly be brought under control by nature cure methods. I suggest your coming to the clinic in Poona when I am there from 1st Jan. It will be for the poor.

Yours
Bapu

Courtesy: *Prof. N. K. Bose*

Gandhi's letter to Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose, dated Sodepur, December 3, 1945

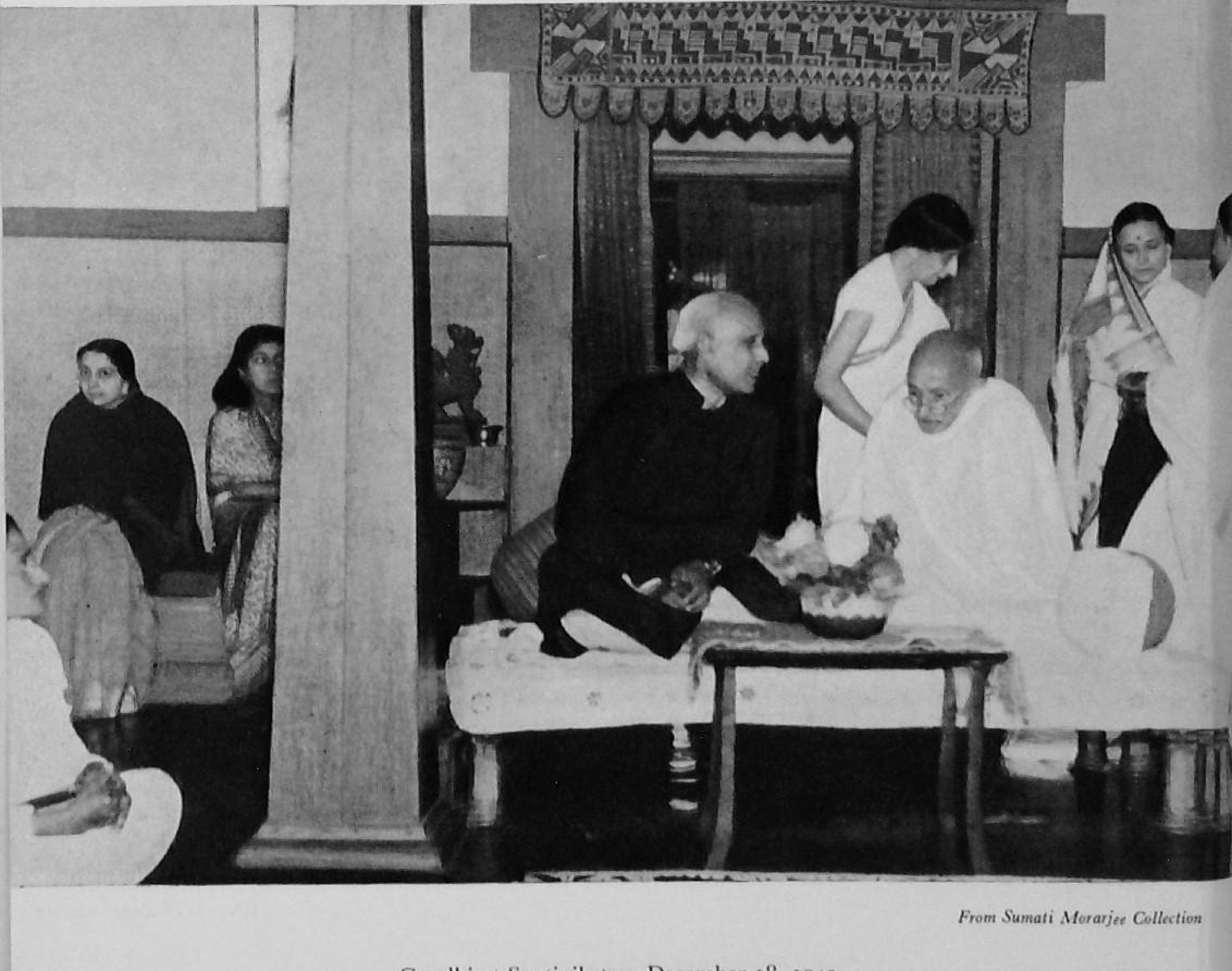


*Courtesy : Hindustan Standard*

With the political prisoners at Dum Dum Central Jail, Calcutta, December 1945

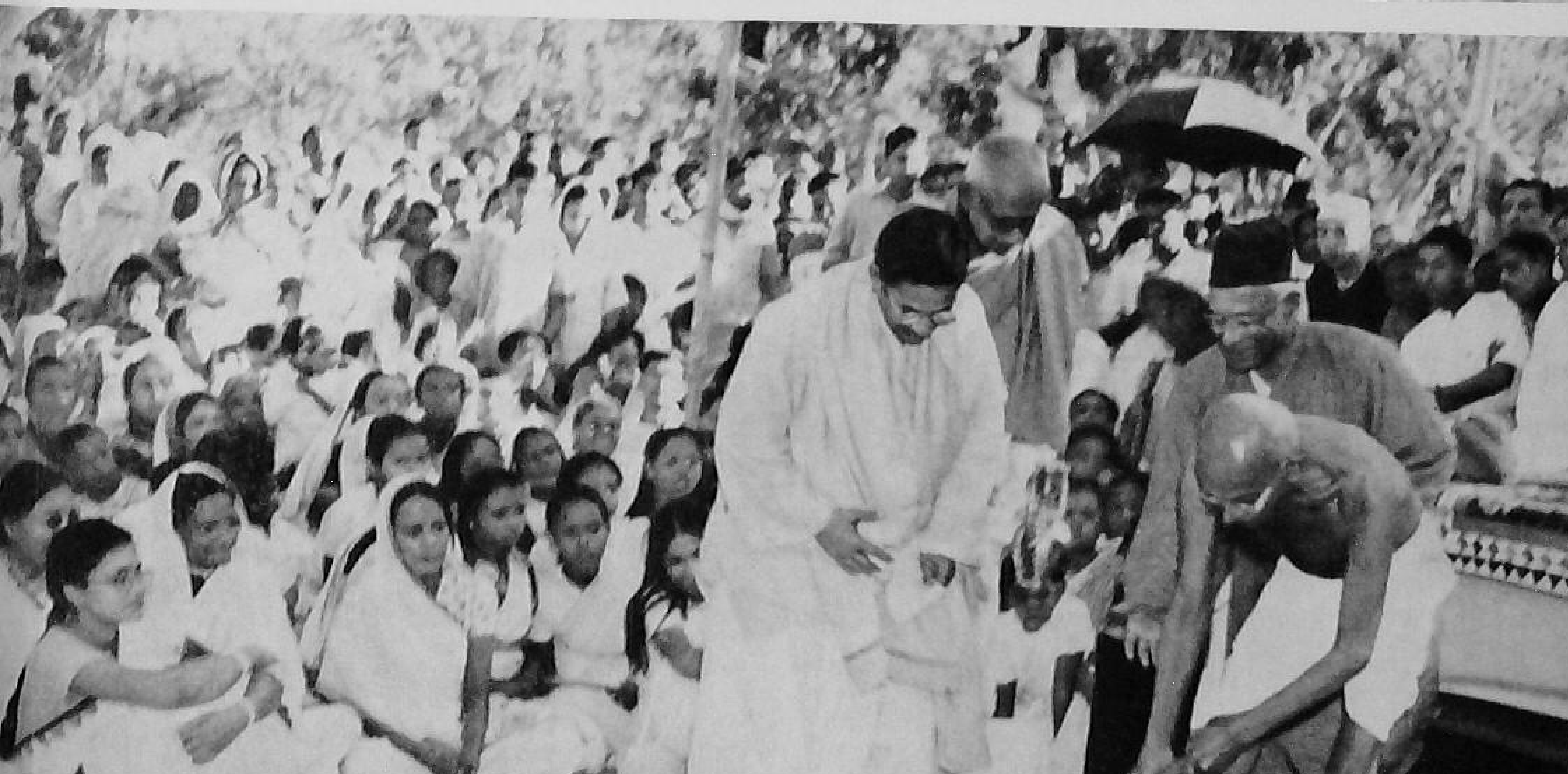
*Courtesy : Hindustan Standard*

At the residence of Netaji Bose, December 1945



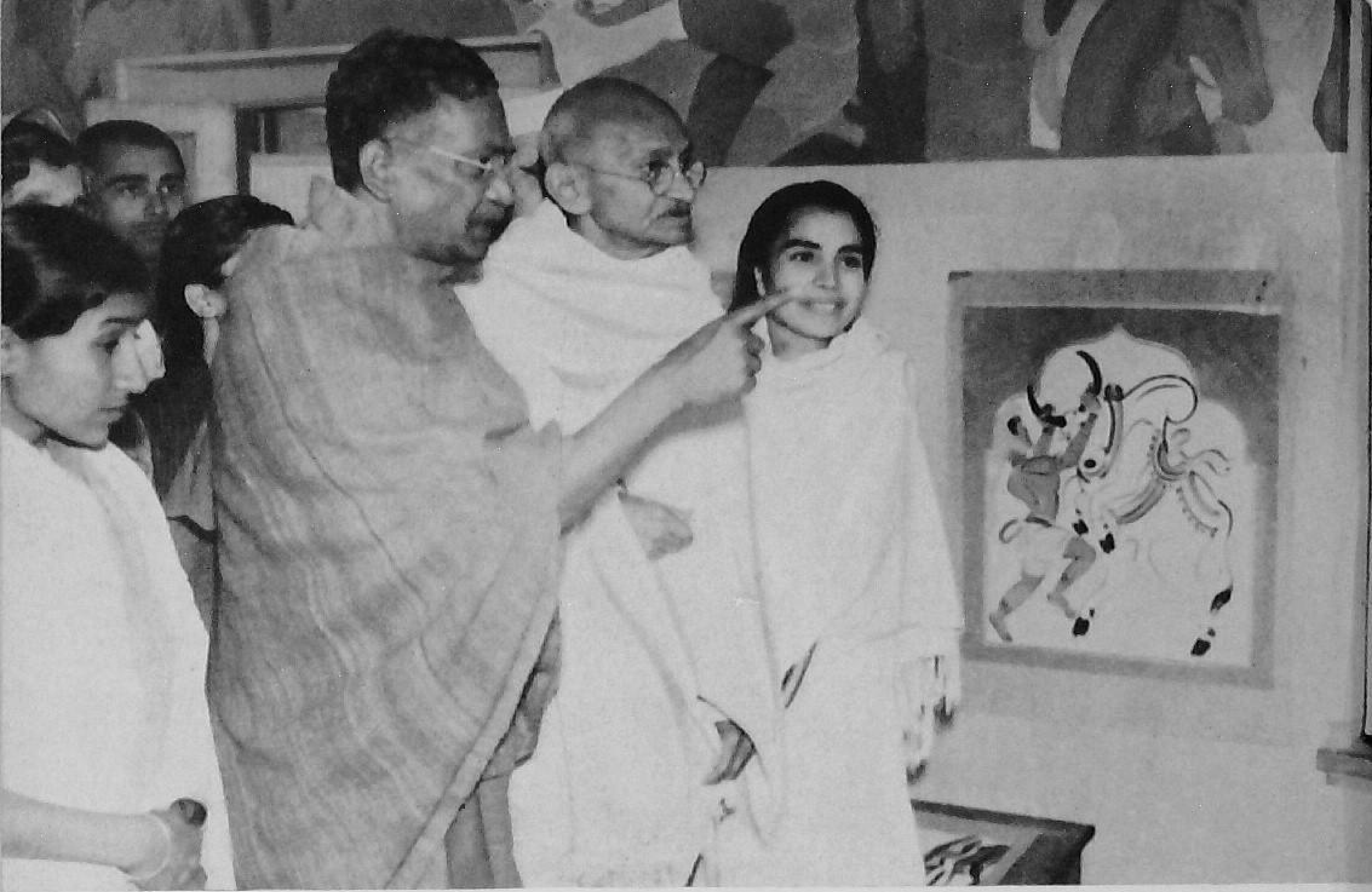
*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

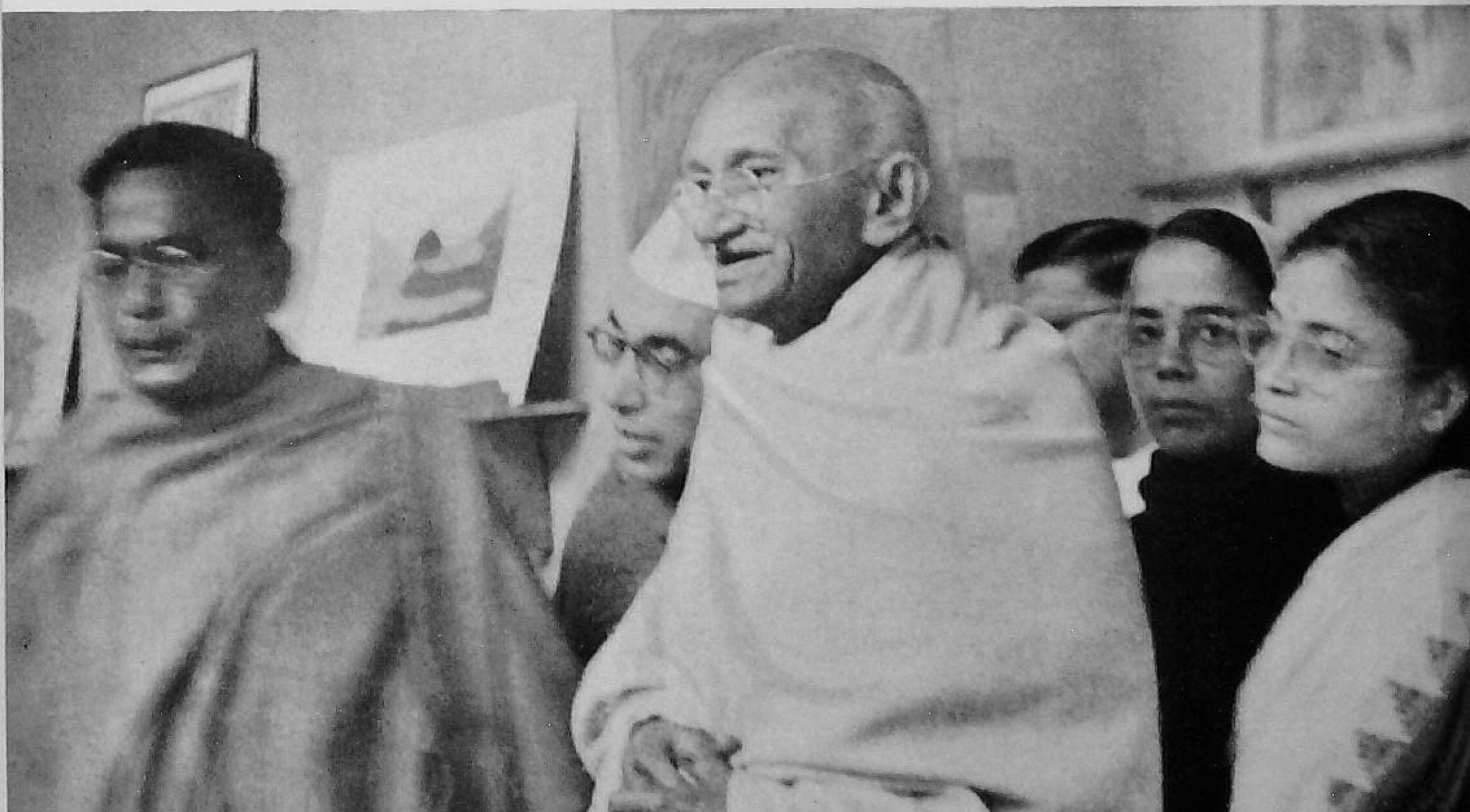
Gandhi at Santiniketan, December 18, 1945



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

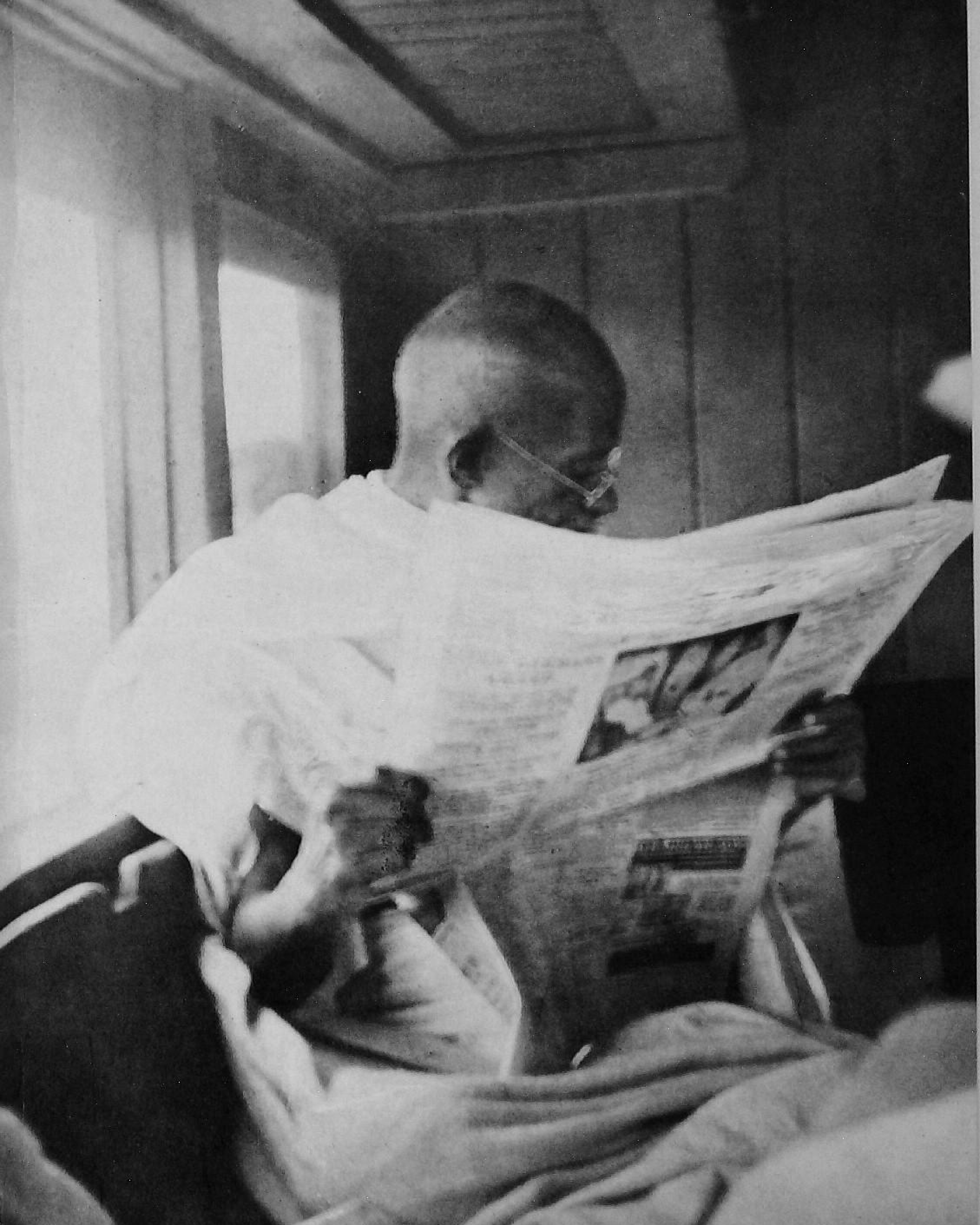
A Santul girl garlanding Gandhi during the foundation-laying ceremony of Deenbandhu Memorial Hospital, Santiniketan, December 19, 1945





*Photographs : B. N. Sinha*

Gandhi with Nandalal Bose at Kalabhawan, Santiniketan, December 19, 1945



Courtesy Hindustan Standard

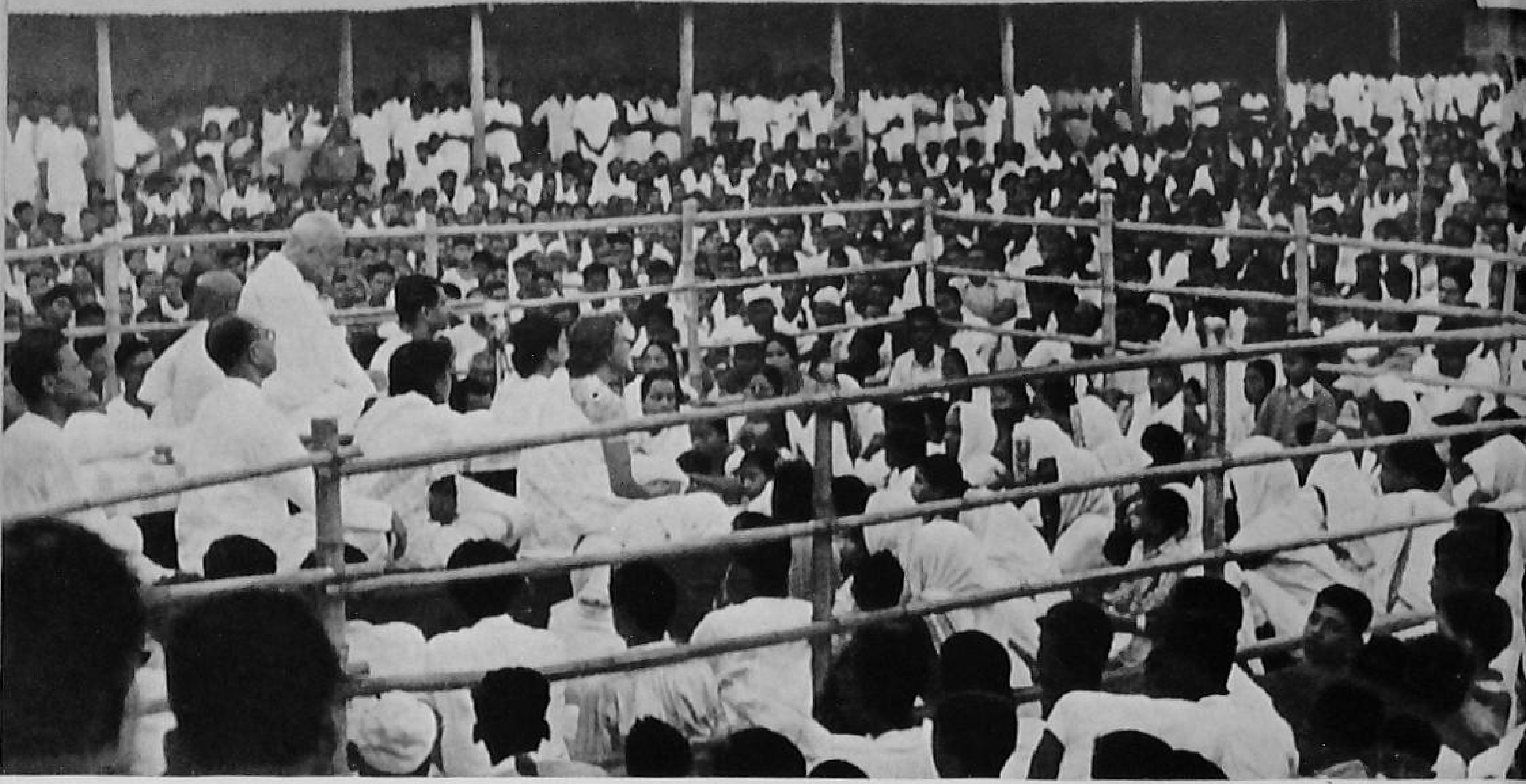
On the train to Calcutta, December 20, 1945

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

With Mr. Casey, Governor of Bengal, Calcutta, December 20, 1945

*Photographs: Kanu Gandhi*

On the Hooghly river on the way to Midnapore, December 25, 1945
Addressing a meeting at Mahishadal, December 1945

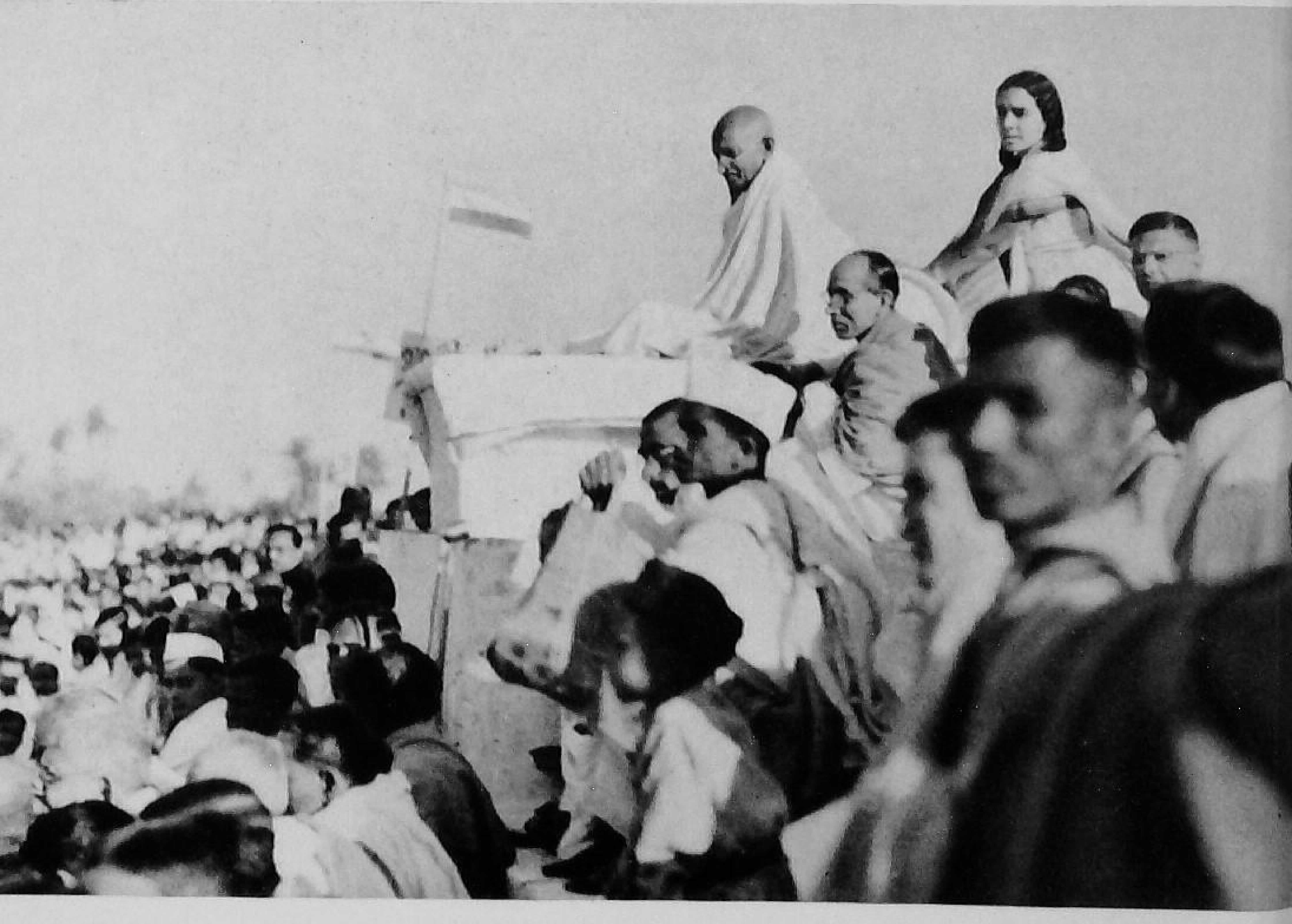


Courtesy : Hindustan Standard

Gandhi addressing a prayer meeting of over

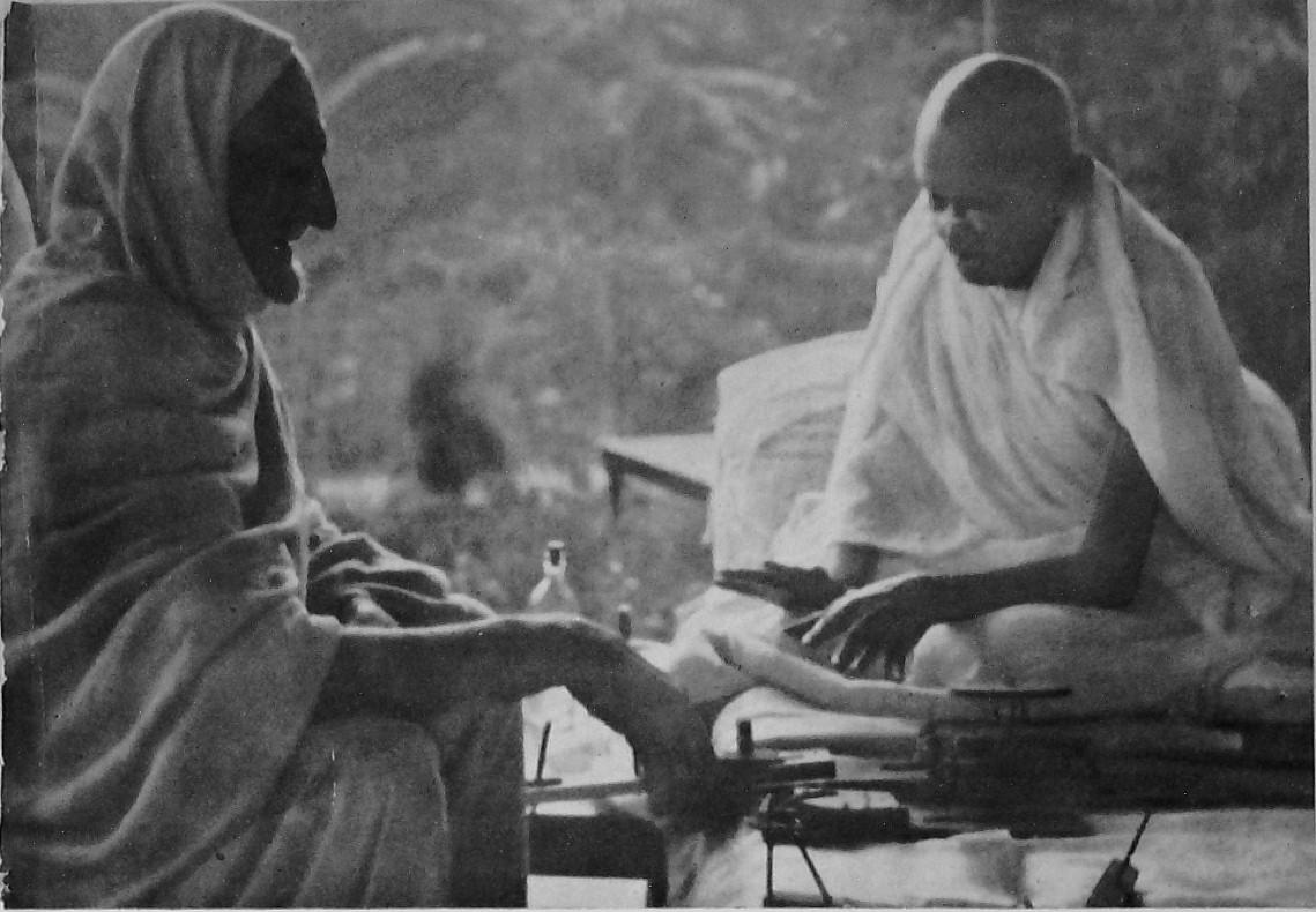
*Photograph : Kanu Gandhi*

60,000 people at Mahishadal, December 1945



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

At Mahishadal ashram
Addressing a meeting at Contai, December 31, 1945



*Photograph : Kanu Gandhi*

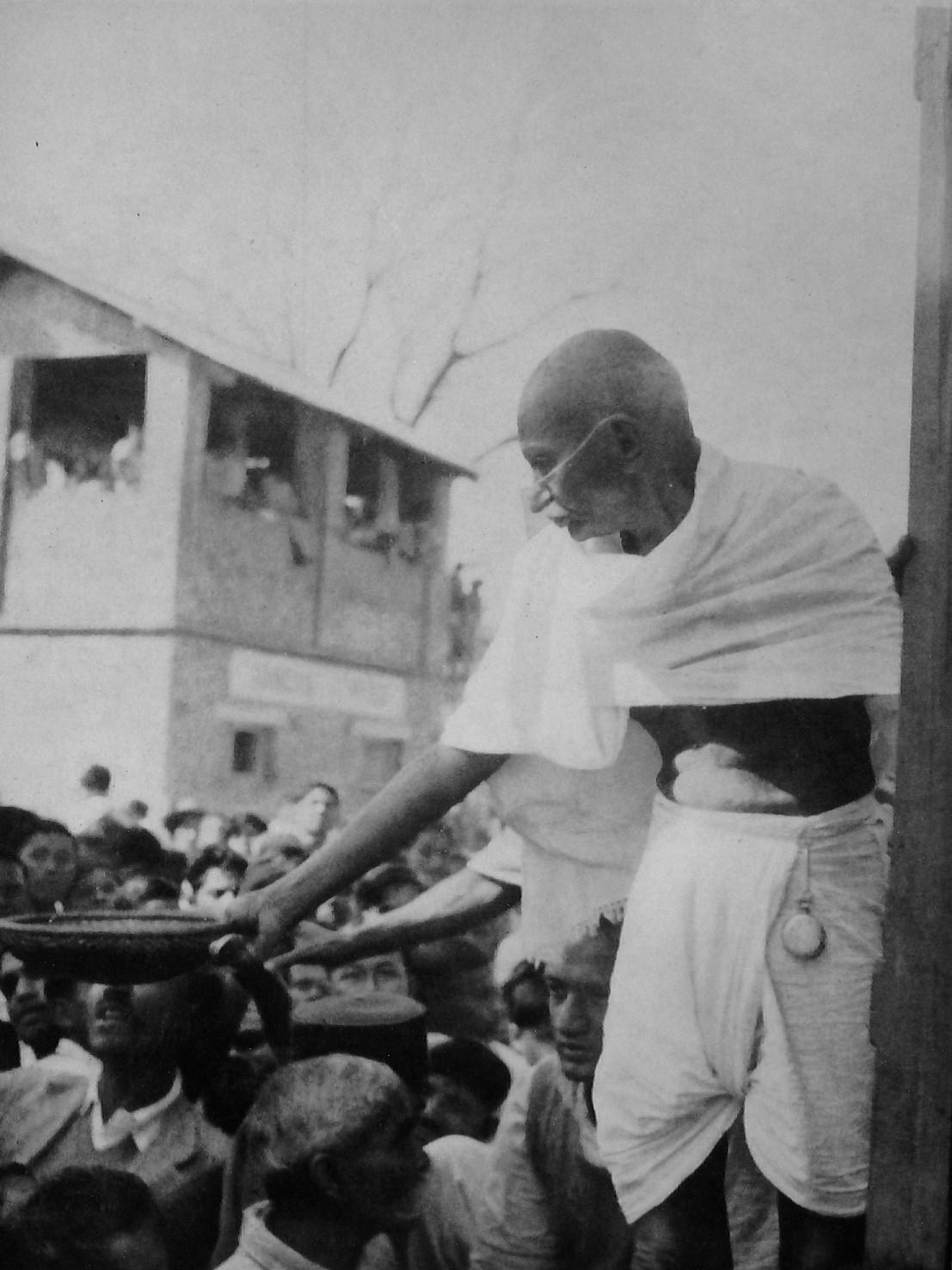
With Ghaffar Khan at Sodepur, January 3, 1946

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

At Goalpara, Assam, January 1946
On the way to Gauhati, at Sualkuchi, January 1946

*Courtesy : Hindustan Standard*

With the Harijans at Gauhati, January 1946
At Sarania ashram, Gauhati, January 10, 1946



*Photograph : Kanu Gandhi*

Collecting for Harijan Funds on a railway station in Assam, January 1946

man would never live to tell the tale of such atrocities. He would have laid down his life on the spot in non-violent resistance.

He left Mahishadal for Contai on December 30. A central feature of his programme was the prayer meetings which were attended by thousands of villagers. In his speech, on December 31, at Contai, Gandhi recalled how in 1934, when he was touring in Orissa in connection with the Harijan programme, a German Nazi had requested to be allowed to accompany him on his tour. The Nazi professed himself to be an ardent admirer of Hitler. He having heard how Gandhi's method was exactly contrary to Hitler's and how in South Africa he had led a successful struggle against General Smuts with only a handful of Indians, and no other weapon than that of non-violence, was curious to meet the author of that movement and study his method at close quarters. Gandhi had granted him his request in the hope of converting him to non-violence, but when the Nazi saw the undisciplined behaviour of Orissa crowds, he told Gandhi that he could now understand how a handful of Britishers in India could keep a nation of 400 millions in bondage. As a result of his experience, he had become sceptical of India ever winning her freedom through non-violence. What India needed, he thought, was Hitler. Gandhi, however had drawn a different moral from the same events. What India needed was discipline, no doubt, but not of the Hitlerite variety. It had to be of non-violent variety. It had to be voluntary. His experience in Bengal, during his present tour, had confirmed him in his faith that the latter was infinitely superior to the former. If six and a quarter crore of Bengalis could display the same discipline which the present gathering had shown that evening, not even a thousand Hitlers would be able to deprive them of their freedom.

On January 2, 1946, Gandhi addressed about 500 workers of the Midnapore district assembled at Contai. They had submitted a list of questions. Before answering them, Gandhi asked whether they understood Hindustani. Some said "Yes", others "No".

"How long would you take to learn it, then?"

"One year".

"Since Hindustani is one out of the eighteen items included in the constructive programme, and since carrying out of all these items in their fulness is swaraj, how long, at this rate, would you take to attain swaraj?" asked Gandhi, and they all burst into laughter.

"In independent India," continued Gandhi, "you would need to have a lingua franca which could be understood by everybody. I am an admirer of the English language, but it can never take the place of the national language."

Gandhi then took up the questions which had been submitted to him before the meeting. The first question invited suggestions, as to how they could make a success of the constructive programme and overcome the obstacles in their way.

In reply, he enumerated the various items of constructive programme. The spinning wheel must not obsess them, though he gave it the central place. There were seventeen other items. Communal unity was one of them. Did they regard all communities as one? Then they must get rid of untouchability, root and branch.

Similarly, they must realize the importance and the place of the mother tongue. Their mother tongue alone could be the language for domestic affairs and day-to-day business. He was in his seventy-seventh year and yet he had set his heart in learning Bengali. He hoped to learn to read Bengali, before he left Midnapore. Nothing would give him greater pleasure, than to be able to talk to them in their own language. He could touch their hearts through Bengali, never through English.

Then there were the Adivasis. The Act of 1935 had separated them from the rest of the inhabitants of India and had placed the "Excluded Areas" under the Government's direct administration. It was a shame that they allowed them to be treated like that. It was up to them to make the Adivasis feel one with them.

The other items were prohibition, village industries, basic education, adult education, women's education in health and in hygiene, economic equality, kisans, workers, students and village sanitation. The last item was the most important and at the same time the most difficult. He almost despaired of the people ever observing the rules of sanitation voluntarily, when he saw riverside fouled without hesitation, even by those who should know better.

"Execution of the constructive programme in its entirety means more than swaraj," he exclaimed. "It means Ram Raj, Khudai Sultanat, or the Divine Kingdom. I am thirsting after such Ram Raj. My God does not reside up above. He has to be realized on this earth. He is here within you, within me. He is omnipotent and omnipresent. You need not think of the world beyond. If we can do

our duty here, the beyond will take care of itself. This necessarily includes political independence."

Such independence could only be achieved through non-violence and truth, exemplified in the constructive work. Even Subhas Babu would admit his thesis.

He did not believe that Subhas Babu was dead. His feeling was that he would appear at the right moment. He admired his courage and patriotism. But he differed from him with regard to the means. He was convinced that real freedom—freedom for the man in the street—could never be achieved through armed revolt.

For him, the parliamentary programme was only a means of promoting the constructive work. The Congress had adopted it because they did not want the self-seekers and enemies of India's freedom to go to the legislatures and hinder the struggle for freedom. He would feel happy, if they sent patriotic scavengers to the legislatures. Their real job would be to keep the undesirables out.

"If India won her freedom through truth and non-violence," he said, "India would not only point the way to all the exploited Asiatic nations, she would become a torch-bearer for the Negro races that inhabit the continent of Africa, and even to Europe. The smaller nationalities lived in fear of losing their freedom. In fact, they had no freedom. India's independence through any other means could never have that result."

He had heard harrowing tales of what the women of Midnapore had suffered. The shame was not theirs, but of the menfolk. God would take them to task for having been helpless witnesses to those atrocities. The only atonement they could make was whole-hearted execution of the constructive programme.

Another worker asked him what he thought of the class struggle which was inevitable in labour work. Gandhi's reply was that the class struggle had been there always. It could only be ended, if the capitalists voluntarily renounced their role and became labourers. The other way was to realize that labour was real capital, in fact, the maker of capital. What the two hands of the labourer could achieve, the capitalist would never get with all his gold and silver. Could anyone live on gold?

But labour had to be made conscious of its strength. It had to have in one hand truth and in the other non-violence, and it would be invincible. "Labour and capital, classes and masses are as old as

the hills. The whole trouble arises from the fact that neither labour nor those who are guiding the labour movement realize the dignity and strength of labour. It is like the lame leading the blind."

Gandhi was asked about Karl Marx. He replied that he got the opportunity and privilege of reading *Capital* by Marx, whilst he was in detention. He entertained high regard for his great industry and acumen. But he could not believe in his conclusion. He had no faith in violence being able to usher in non-violence. The world thought was moving and was outdating Marx. That, however, did not detract from the merit of the great man's labours.

He ended by saying that non-co-operation and civil disobedience in the terms of swaraj were not to be thought of without substantial constructive effort. Either, without the latter, will be body without soul, as good as dead.

Gandhi returned to Sodepur on January 3. Some 800 workers from the districts of Bengal met him in conference on the ashram grounds on the 5th and the following day.

He explained to the workers briefly the place of the constructive programme in the struggle for freedom, and its relation to civil disobedience. After enumerating the various items of the constructive programme, as mentioned in the revised edition of his brochure *Constructive Programme*, a copy of which had come into his hands on the day before, he asked them to take note of the fact that the charkha and khaddar was only one, though by no means the least important, out of the eighteen items in that programme.

Civil disobedience had been mentioned at the end of the eighteen items. It had a place there, since the theme of the book was constructive programme, not merely as an economic activity, but as a means for the attainment of swaraj. Civil disobedience was of two types, individual and mass. Individual civil disobedience was everybody's inherent right, like the right of self-defence in normal life. No special sanction was needed for the practice of this kind of civil disobedience. Just as a man in normal life would use his dagger, revolver or even fisticuffs to stay off a sudden attack, even so civil disobedience would be resorted to by the constructive worker, as a non-violent equivalent to the use of fisticuffs or arms. This did not need sanction or permission from anybody.

As an illustration of how this civil disobedience could be used to overcome Government's opposition to constructive work, he took

up the hypothetical cause of a worker engaged in the service of the Adivasis. If the Government prevented him from going among them he would simply disobey the order. The Government might put him in prison; he would welcome it. It would be a most auspicious beginning for his work. The very fact that he had gone to prison, in order to serve the Adivasis, would enshrine him in their hearts.

Mass civil disobedience was for the attainment of independence. For it, fulfilment of the constructive programme, almost in its entirety, was an indispensable preliminary condition. The "Quit India" resolution might be cited as an exception to this rule. To this, his reply was that it was justified by the exceptional circumstances into which, however, he did not propose to take them at present. Moreover, the movement had never been started.

He took up the first two items from the constructive programme, and showed how they helped the struggle for independence. The first was communal unity. If they could achieve true heart unity among all the communities—not as a political expedient to be cast aside when its purpose was served, or as a token of their common dislike of the third party—no power on earth would be able to sow division amongst them as at present. And even a child could understand that an India united would be an India free. The same held true in regard to the removal of untouchability.

Gandhi then proceeded to answer the questions.

Question: "You have advised the charkha workers to keep themselves detached from the political work of the Congress. But from experience, the questioner finds that such centres fail to make the people conscious fighters for swaraj. On the other hand, the other centres, where the workers have been working in double functions—both as charkha as well as Congress workers—give a better account of themselves during the struggle. So please make your directions in this respect clear."

Gandhi: "It is a good question but it betrays want of clear thinking. All I have said is that a khadi worker will not be able to do full justice to his work, if he has too many irons in the fire. Khadi work demands one's undivided attention. But that does not mean that it should be done mechanically. No khadi worker can afford to be indifferent to other things, with which khadi is interrelated, or lose sight of its co-relation to the struggle for independence. Experience has shown, that wherever intensive charkha work had been done, the

people had shown greater grit, unity and capacity for organization in the struggle for independence."

Question: "The dynamic quality seems to have gone out of the constructive activity as symbolized by the charkha. What should be done to bring out its revolutionary significance?"

Gandhi: "Dr. Radhakumud Mukerjee in one of his books has quoted Celebrooke as saying that in India, the home of chronic poverty, the spinning wheel is the provider of butter to bread for the poor. The late R. C. Dutt has shown how the prosperity of the East India Company was founded on their trade in Indian textiles. No part of the world, neither China nor Japan, could produce fabrics to equal them. In the early phase, the East India Company battened on the exploitation of its monopoly in the Indian textiles. Not only did it bring them immense trade profits, it also gave an impetus to British shipping. Later, Lancashire developed its own textile industry, following upon a series of mechanical inventions. This brought it into competition with the Indian textile manufactures. The policy of exploitation of the Indian artisans then gave way to that of destruction of their craft.

"An English writer has observed that the history of cotton is the history of civilization. Politics is the handmaid of commerce. Indian history provides an apt illustration of it. In the heyday of our cotton manufactures, we used to grow all the cotton for our needs. The cotton seed was fed to the cattle which provided the health-giving milk to the people. Agriculture flourished. The lint was turned into beautiful fabrics of which the *jamdanis* of Dacca were a specimen. As an offshoot, we had the world-famed dyeing and printing art of Masulipatam. Connoisseurs say that our old indigenous dyes could not be matched by any in the world for their permanence, as well as brightness and beauty. All that is gone now. India is today naked. We have to cover her nakedness. If anybody could suggest a better substitute than the spinning wheel for the purpose, I would discard the spinning wheel today. But none has been found so far and I dare say none is likely to be found.

"The question may, however, be asked: 'How can the charkha bring India freedom, when it could not prevent its loss?' The reply is that in the past charkha was not linked with the idea of freedom. Nor did it then symbolize the power of non-violence. In olden days it symbolized our slavery. We had not realized that our progress,

prosperity and even freedom depended on the charkha, or else we should have put up a fight and resorted to satyagraha, to save it from destruction. What was lost through our ignorance and our apathy has now to be won back through intelligence and knowledge. We have today ceased to think for ourselves. The Government says that Bengal is a pauper province, and we mechanically accept the statement. To call a province, which boasts of six and a half crore of population, as pauper is only to proclaim our own intellectual bankruptcy. Did not the Governor of Bengal observe in a broadcast talk the other day that the cultivator in Bengal remains unemployed for six months in the year? Can any population in the world subsist while remaining idle for half the year? Even if all the water that the rains bring were captured and harnessed to irrigation, it would not keep the masses alive, if their enforced unemployment for the better part of the year were not removed. Our real malady is not destitution but laziness, apathy and inertia. You may achieve marvels of irrigational engineering. But the well-filled granaries alone cannot and will not end our slavery. To end slavery, you must overcome the mental and physical inertia of the masses and quicken their intelligence and creative faculty. It is my claim that the universalization of hand-spinning, with a full knowledge of all that it stands for, alone can bring that about in a sub-continent, so vast and varied, as India. I have compared spinning to the central sun and other village crafts to the various constellations in the solar system. The former gives light and warmth to the latter and sustains them. Without it, they would not be able to exist."

Question: "If swaraj hangs on the thread of hand-spun yarn, as you say, why have we failed to attain it up till now, after a quarter of century of khadi work?"

Gandhi: "Because our labour was not quickened by knowledge. The peace of the grave makes the latter the house of death. But the peace in the soul makes it the seat of divine intelligence. Similarly, soulless labour symbolizes serfdom. Labour illumined with knowledge symbolizes the will to freedom. There is a world of difference between the two. The khadi workers should understand that the khadi work without mastery of the science of khadi will be love's labour lost in terms of swaraj."

Question: "What do you mean by the science of spinning? What things are included in it?"

Gandhi: "I have often said that I can do without food, but not without the sacrificial spinning. I have also claimed that no one in India has perhaps done his spinning with such unfailing regularity and conscientious diligence, as I have. And yet, I will say that all that by itself cannot take the place of scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge requires constant probing into the why and wherefore of every little process that you perform. The mere affirmation that in charkha there is swaraj and peace is not enough. A scientific mind will not be satisfied with having things scientific just on faith. He will insist on finding a basis in reason. Faith becomes lame, when it ventures into matters pertaining to reason. Its field begins, where reason's ends. Conclusions based on faith are unshakable, whereas those based on reason are liable to be unstable and vulnerable to superior logic. To state the limitation of science is not to belittle it. We cannot do without either—each in its own place.

"When I first discovered the spinning wheel it was purely through intuition. It was not backed by knowledge, so much so, that I confused charkha with handloom. Later on, however, I tried to work out its possibilities with the help of the late Maganlal Gandhi. For instance, the question arose: Why should the spindle be made of iron, and not of brass? Should it be thin or thick? What would be the proper thickness? We began with mill spindles. Then, spindle-holders used to be bamboo and wood. Later we came to leather and gut bearings. It was found that the spindles got easily bent and were difficult to straighten. And so, we tried to make them out of knitting needles and ultimately of the umbrella wires. All this called for the exercise of the inventive faculty and scientific research.

"A khadi worker with a scientific mind will not stop there. 'Why charkha, why not spinning mill?' he will ask himself. The reply will be that everybody cannot own a spinning mill. If people depend on the spinning mills for their clothing, whoever controls the spinning mills will control them, and thus there will be an end to the individual liberty. Today, anyone can reduce the whole of London and New York to submission within twenty-four hours by cutting off their electric and water supply. Individual liberty and interdependence are both essential for life in society. Only a Robinson Crusoe can afford to be all self-sufficient. When a man has done all he can do for the satisfaction of his essential requirements, then he will seek the co-operation of his neighbours for the rest. That will be the true

co-operation. Thus a scientific study of the spinning wheel will lead on to sociology. The spinning wheel will not become a power for the liberation of India in our hands, unless we have made a deep study of the various sciences related to it. It will then not only make India free, but point the way to the whole world.

"Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has very aptly remarked that at one time India was not lacking in the inventive spirit, but today India has become dormant. Once one gets the scientific outlook, it will be reflected in every act of his—in his eating, drinking, rest, sleep—everything will be scientifically regulated and with a full appreciation of its why and wherefore. Finally, a scientific mind must have detachment, or else it will land itself into the lunatic asylum. The Upanishad says that whatever there is in this universe is from Him. It belongs to Him and must be surrendered to Him, and then only enjoyed. Enjoyment and sorrow, success and failure will then be the same to you.

"One thing more. Supposing, the tyrant wants to destroy the spinning wheel itself. What then? My reply is that in that event we should ourselves perish with the spinning wheel and not live to witness its destruction. For every khadi worker, who thus sacrifices himself, thousands will arise to take his place. That act of his will set the final seal of victory on the cause he represents."

A British correspondent who visited Gandhi during his stay at Sodepur touched some significant points. He made a remark which set Gandhi to describe some of his experiences relating to the disability of colour bar in South Africa. The question deeply interested the journalist. He thought that it was perhaps at its worst in South Africa. Gandhi, however, was doubtful. He feared it was probably as bad in America. The journalist who had visited Richmond, "to have the flavour of South America", could not gainsay the force of Gandhi's remark, but contended that the extraordinary conditions there presented a peculiar problem. "I can understand the American prejudice against the Negro," he added.

"Arguing on those lines," observed Gandhi, "you will be able to understand the prejudice in South Africa too. The root cause—a false notion of preservation of the race and the economic status—is common to both. The difference is only one of degree. If you apply concrete facts to individual cases, it is half a dozen of one and six of the other. It is on a par with the racial prejudice here."

"Oh, no," said the journalist. "Here it is much less."

Gandhi retorted: "Yes, owing to the vast disparity in numbers. But take the case of the individual who actually suffers. His experience does not differ from that of the coloured man in South Africa or America."

The journalist agreed: "We, Englishmen, are apt to forget that side of the question."

"Habit becomes second nature," replied Gandhi. "There may be no deliberate intention either."

"In the Punjab and Delhi," resumed the journalist, "races mix much more freely than elsewhere. Was that due to the fact that the disparity in numbers was comparatively less there?"

Gandhi was of opinion that the contrast presented by Bengal in this respect was perhaps due to the violent spirit having manifested itself there on a much larger scale than in Delhi or in the Punjab. The Punjab did show the violent spirit in some measure. But it was not a patch on Bengal. The daring of the Chittagong Armoury raid was neither attempted, nor duplicated anywhere else.

"I have thought over it," said the journalist, "and it has always baffled me how these Bengali young men, so gentle by nature, have drifted into violence."

"I have solved it for myself," said Gandhi. "They feel they have been unjustly libelled in the past. Lord Curzon harped upon their softness. It soured them. So they say, 'We may not be wealthy, but surely we are not effeminate.' So they adopted this devious method and surpassed every other province in daring. They defied death, defied poverty and even public opinion. I have discussed this question of violence threadbare with many terrorists and anarchists. It is terrible whether the Arab does it or the Jew. It is a bad outlook for the world, if this spirit of violence takes hold of the mass mind. Ultimately, in destroying itself, it destroys the race."

"And it has spread all over the world for the last two or three years," interpolated the journalist.

Gandhi said: "Look at the latest ukase of General MacArthur. He has divided the entire Japanese nation into two categories—those whom he calls war criminals and those who don't come under that label. As I read it, it struck me that this was not the best way to introduce democracy among the Japanese—a race so proud, so sensitive, and so highly organized along western lines. They will do

what the Italians did in Garibaldi's time, on a much larger scale. You cannot deal with the human race on these lines. Whatever happens in one part of the world, will affect the other parts. The world has so shrunk."

The journalist remarked that he did not think that the world had deteriorated so much theoretically, as it might have during the last three years. Gandhi agreed, though his grounds, were different.

"My reason for that belief is," continued the journalist, "that in spite of the fact that suffering, for instance, in Indonesia and elsewhere has been appalling during the last three years, the human mind has not been equally warped."

Gandhi replied: "My hope is based on a detached view of the situation. Whilst in detention in the Aga Khan Palace, I had leisure to read and think. What struck me was that, whilst practice showed deterioration, the mind of men had very much progressed. Practice had not been able to keep pace with the mind. Man has begun to say, 'This is wrong, that is wrong'. Whereas previously he justified his conduct, he now no longer justifies his own or his neighbour's. He wants to set right the wrong, but does not know that his own practice fails him. The contradiction between his thought and his conduct fetters him. His conduct is not governed by logic. Then, of course, there is my standing prediction in favour of non-violence that it will prevail—whatever man may or may not do. That keeps my optimism alive. Extensive personal experience too confirms my belief that non-violence is self-acting. It will have its way and overcome all obstacles, irrespective of the shortcomings of the instruments. It makes no difference how we arrive at our conclusion, but it keeps us fresh and green."

## *Harijan Revived*

1946

GANDHI arrived at Gauhati on January 9, 1946. On the route, the crowds disturbed him by shouting slogans. Gandhi promptly issued the following appeal:

"The last night was a terrible night for me. The crowds at every station were unmanageable. The shouts, although well meant, could not please me in my old age, if they ever pleased me before. For I know that swaraj is made of truer and sterner stuff. They serve no useful purpose. In the beginning stages, when people, out of fear, were afraid to hear their own voice, shouts and slogans had a place, not today, when we seem likely to achieve independence, may be within a few months. I was allowed last night no sleep, except for what I could snatch in between stations.

"I cannot repeat this performance for many days, and hope to live to the age of 125 years. Friends will now appreciate why I have hardened my heart against even a brief tour through East Bengal. I would love to travel throughout Bengal, but I know, that for the sake of common cause, I must refrain myself and invite my friends and co-workers to do likewise. Let them and people at large satisfy themselves with what service I can render without travel, as I used to do before. Let the leaders in the various places try to conciliate the populace surrounding them, and advise them to refrain from shouts and slogans and from jostling one another."

Addressing a prayer meeting the following day, Gandhi referred to the indisciplined behaviour of the people. He said this indicated that the masses had not yet fully imbibed the principle of non-violence. Indiscipline, he added, was only a variety of violence. If forty crores of people or even a major part of them had assimilated the message of truth and non-violence, which the Congress had been preaching for the last twenty-five years, India would have been free. But that was no reason for despair or even despondency. To

inculcate perfect discipline and non-violence among forty crores of people was no joke. It needed time.

Twenty-five years were insufficient for such a tremendous task. That was why he desired to live 125 years, so that he might with his own eyes see the consummation of his own ideas. But he could not hope to live up to that span of life, unless conditions attaching to it were fulfilled. If these conditions were fulfilled, not only he, but anybody, even in a country like India, where the average expectancy of life was the lowest in the world, could live up to that period. It was clear, however, that if he exposed himself to experiences like that of the last night, his candle would be burnt out within a month.

The Britishers might realize, as they were bound to, one day, that they could not hold down an awakened people for all time with the force of bayonets and, therefore, decide to transfer power to them. The people would find themselves in a quandary in that event, if they had no discipline and organization. He hoped that they would not allow themselves to be caught napping like that. There was no greater spellbinder of peace than the name of God. He had, therefore, commenced the practice of holding mass prayers and inviting the people to join singing of Ramdhun to the beating of time with hands, to inculcate in the mass the spirit of non-violence and discipline. He would love to see that the whole of India was covered with prayer gatherings like that.

During his one week's stay in Assam, he explained to the people the significance of constructive programme. He described how, with a capital expenditure of about twenty-five lakhs of rupees, they had been able to put into the pockets of the poor no less than a sum of five and a half crore of rupees. India's cloth consumption at present amounted to one hundred crores of rupees, according to the price level at present. All that money could be prevented from going out of the pockets of the poor by the fulfilment of only one item of the constructive programme, namely, khadi.

He incidentally referred to the power this work could generate and mentioned the case of Adivasis. Today, the Adivasis had been put into watertight compartments by the Government and they were classified as tribal people. It was their shame, he added, that they should be isolated from the rest of the nation of which they were an inalienable part. Here in Assam was a vast field for the constructive programme. And nobody could prevent them from undertaking the

work here. If one was prevented from rendering silent service to the Adivasis, he should prefer to go to prison as prison-going would even in itself advance their cause.

From Assam, Gandhi started for Madras. On the way, he passed through Orissa. Cuttack was reached at midnight. A large crowd had gathered there and he came out of the train to address them. There was noise and confusion. It had cut him to the quick that Orissa, which he had loved so fondly and through which he had made his Harijan pilgrimage on foot, should belie his expectations. Was this their non-violence or did they imagine that freedom would be won or kept through indiscipline and hooliganism against the atom bomb, which was the ultimate of brute force? It was time that they made up their mind, as to their choice between the two paths. They were at liberty to scrap non-violence, if they felt that it was a played-out force. But if they were thinking of violence while they professed non-violence, they would be guilty of deception and fraud upon themselves and the world. "I don't want your cheers of welcome, nor your money during these stoppages," he remarked. "I want you to purge yourselves of the lie in the soul. That will please me more than your gifts, noises never will and never have."

On January 20, the train reached Berhampur at four in the morning. A mammoth gathering was waiting to hear Gandhi. Addressing the crowd, he said:

"In these early hours I meet you, and I am glad. I am sorry I could not stay with you for a day in Orissa. You will excuse me. My health is not like before. At Bhadrak and Balasore the crowds were very disciplined, so I thought it was better that I stop at Cuttack. In the original programme, no stoppage at Cuttack of the special was arranged. In Cuttack, the mob was unruly. It was about 1.30 a.m. At such a time, one shall not be disturbed in his sleep. That too an old man like myself. They afterwards became orderly. You are sitting in calm. My prayer is not only at your place but at all places, that it should be so. Through unruliness, we cannot win swaraj. You know me and I know you. I am not new to you. You should carry on constructive work. You should take to khadi work and removal of untouchability earnestly.

"I agreed to come to you so early in the morning, because I hope that Orissa will show the lead in these matters. I know the British will leave India tomorrow. If they go, not out of your strength, of

what use is it to us. If you think you can make the British leave the country by empty shows, you are not correct. I have no doubt that through non-violence and truth alone we can achieve swaraj."

He arrived in Madras on January 21. Opening the Constructive Workers' Conference on the 24th, he rebuked the workers, because the printed programme was in English. It should have been either in Tamil or in Hindustani, he remarked.

Some among the audience did not understand what Gandhi was saying. Gandhi sharply rebuked them for not knowing Hindustani. He told them that the time was past when he used to address them in English, if only to please them. He had now decided to reserve his English for the Englishmen and the foreigners only. And so far as they were concerned, he would prefer to speak to them in his broken Hindustani, even if he could make himself better understood by speaking in English. He exhorted all Indians to make it certain that they no longer talked in English among themselves, but only in their *matrubhasha* or *rashtrabhasha*.

Gandhi reiterated that swaraj could be achieved only through the constructive programme. The parliamentary programme and the constructive programme were both before the country. It was not a question of one being inferior to the other, but he wanted to make it clear to them all that for India to win her independence through truth and non-violence, constructive work was absolutely essential. Those who went to the legislatures should go there primarily to promote the constructive work. But in any case, he was of opinion that the lovers of freedom should go to the legislatures, if only to prevent those who did not want freedom from getting in and posing as the country's representatives.

Presiding over the silver jubilee celebrations of the Hindi Prachar Sabha on January 25, Gandhi stated that he appreciated the work done by them for the last twenty-seven years. "The work you have done all these years is just like a drop in the ocean. So try from today to read and write and learn Hindustani in right earnest and as quickly as possible. My only request to you is to forget English altogether. It is of no use to us. If you give a fraction of whatever energy and time you had wasted in learning English for learning Hindustani, you will have no language difficulty."

He recommended that the present name of the Hindi Prachar Sabha should be changed to the Hindustani Prachar Sabha. He said

that the use of the English language was much in vogue in the south and more so in Madras. He asked the people whether they could not free themselves from the chains of the English language. "It is your *dharma* to learn Hindustani," he said. "When we have learnt both Hindi and Urdu, then only we can say that Hindustan is really ours. Learn Hindustani for the sake of Hindustan, for India's swaraj and for the good and welfare of the people of India."

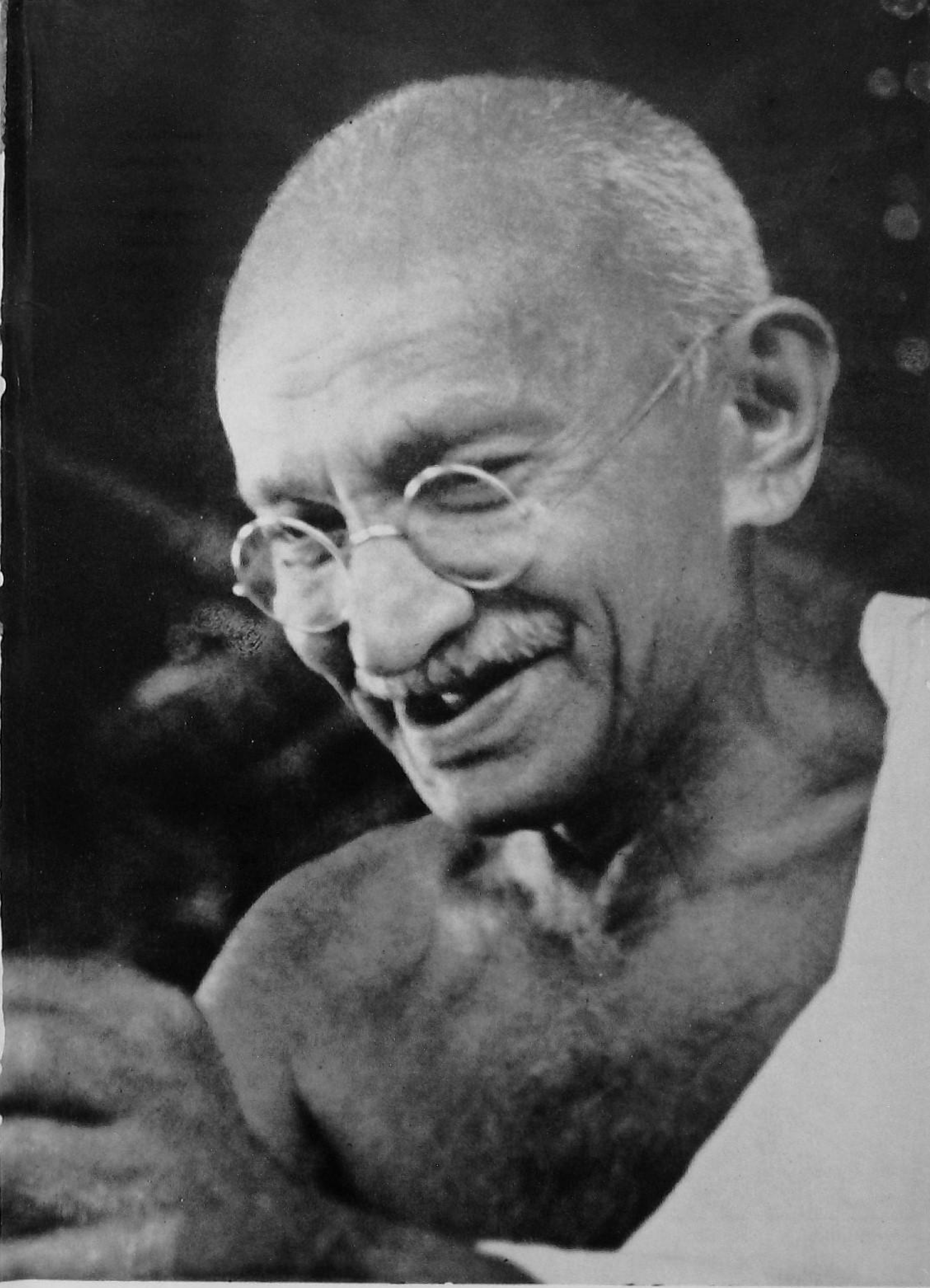
Throughout his stay in Madras, Gandhi harped on the theme of *rashtrabhasha*. What really pained him in Madras was not merely the prevalence of English amongst the educated classes and their desire to have him address them or sign the autographs for them in English, but the petty jealousy that existed between one local language and another. The rivalry between Tamil and Telugu came to a head at the public prayers, when it was insisted that if what he said in Hindustani was translated into Tamil, it should also be translated into Telugu. The result was that Gandhi refused to have his address translated in either language.

On January 26, Independence Day, Gandhi spoke on its significance. He said that the festivals varied in character with the time. He asked the people to pray to God to either give them freedom or strength to die for it. "Let us hope," he remarked, "we shall not have to repeat this pledge next year, but shall have attained our freedom before that. It is given to men but to try. The result is in the hands of God."

The special feature of that pledge, he reminded them, was that the means to be adopted for the attainment of independence were unadulterated truth and non-violence. Crores of people had been repeating that same pledge for the last twenty-five years and offering prayers for the fulfilment of that pledge to the Most High, who though far was yet nearer to us than our hands and feet.

It was the self-same power, though recognized by numerous designations—Allah, Rama, Rahim, God and so on. There was no limit to his names. They were as countless as his attributes. It was to this unseen power, which permeated and sustained the universe that their prayers were made. It would be heard only, if their means were as pure and spotless, as their end.

Could the people, he asked, expect God to crown their resolve with success, if their means included falsehood, deceit, violence and deception? Such a prayer would never ascend to heaven. It would

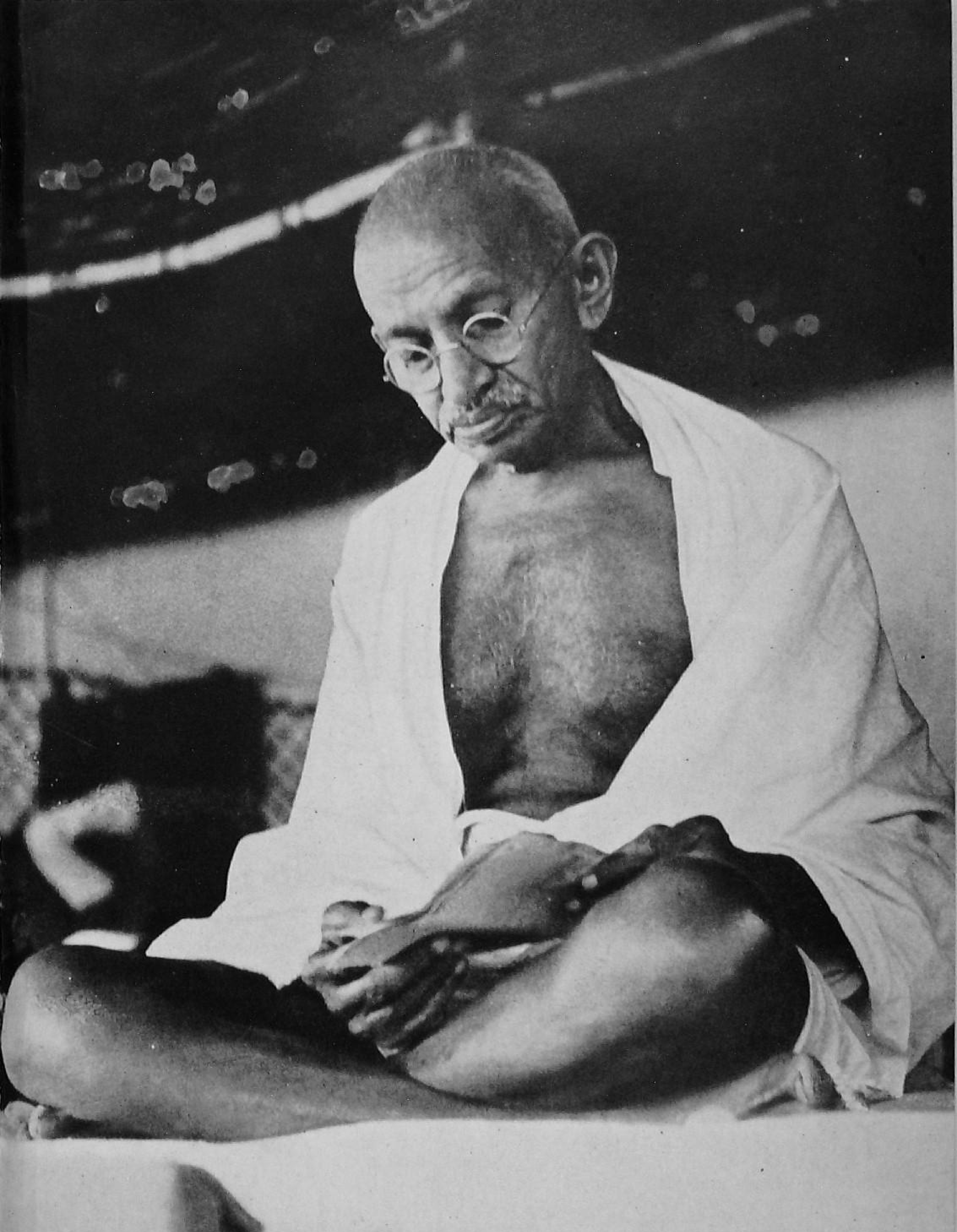


*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi in Madras, January 21, 1946

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

On the way to the Constructive Workers' Conference, Madras, January 24, 1946



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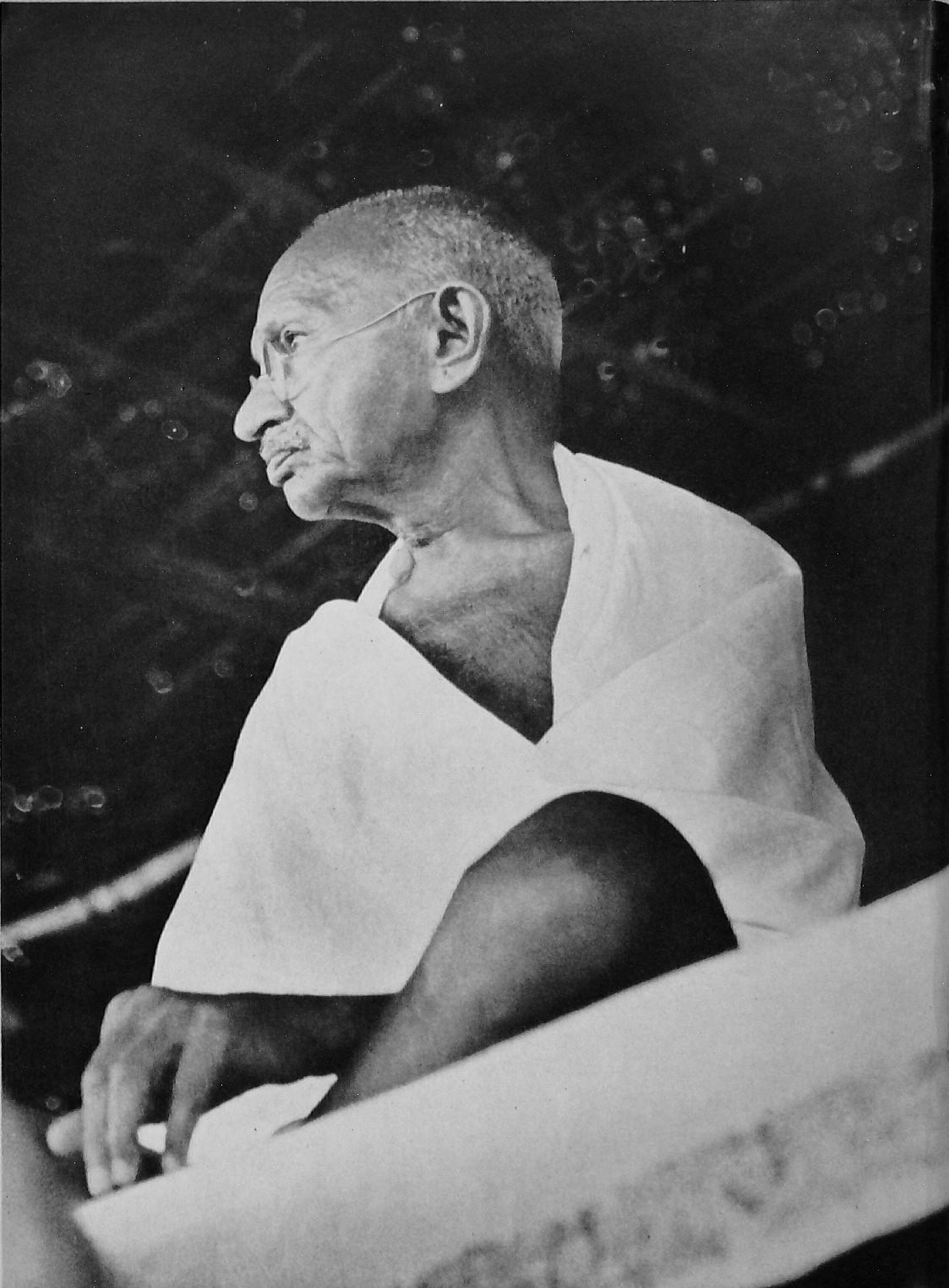
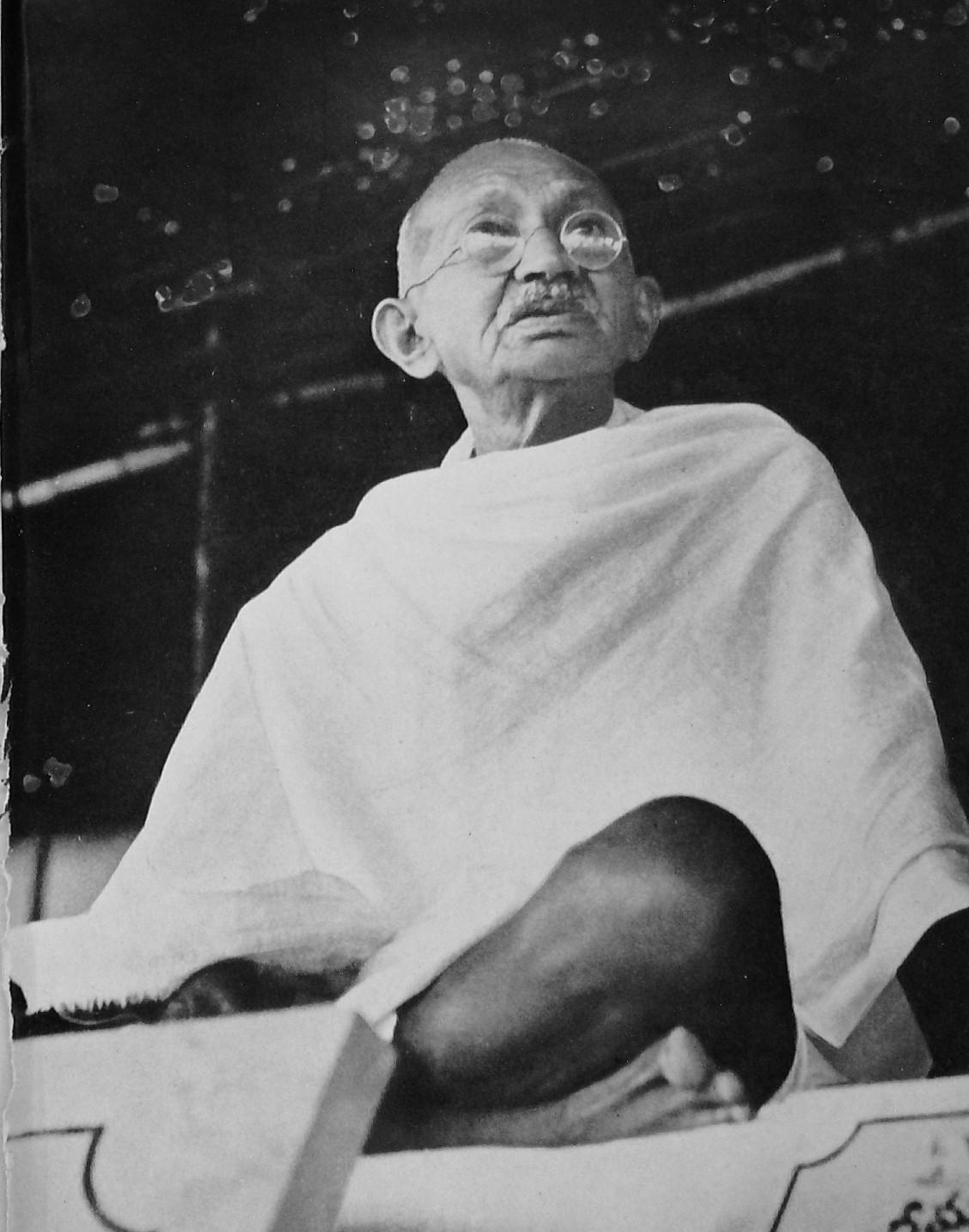
At the Constructive Workers' Conference



Gandhi addressing the Constructive Workers'



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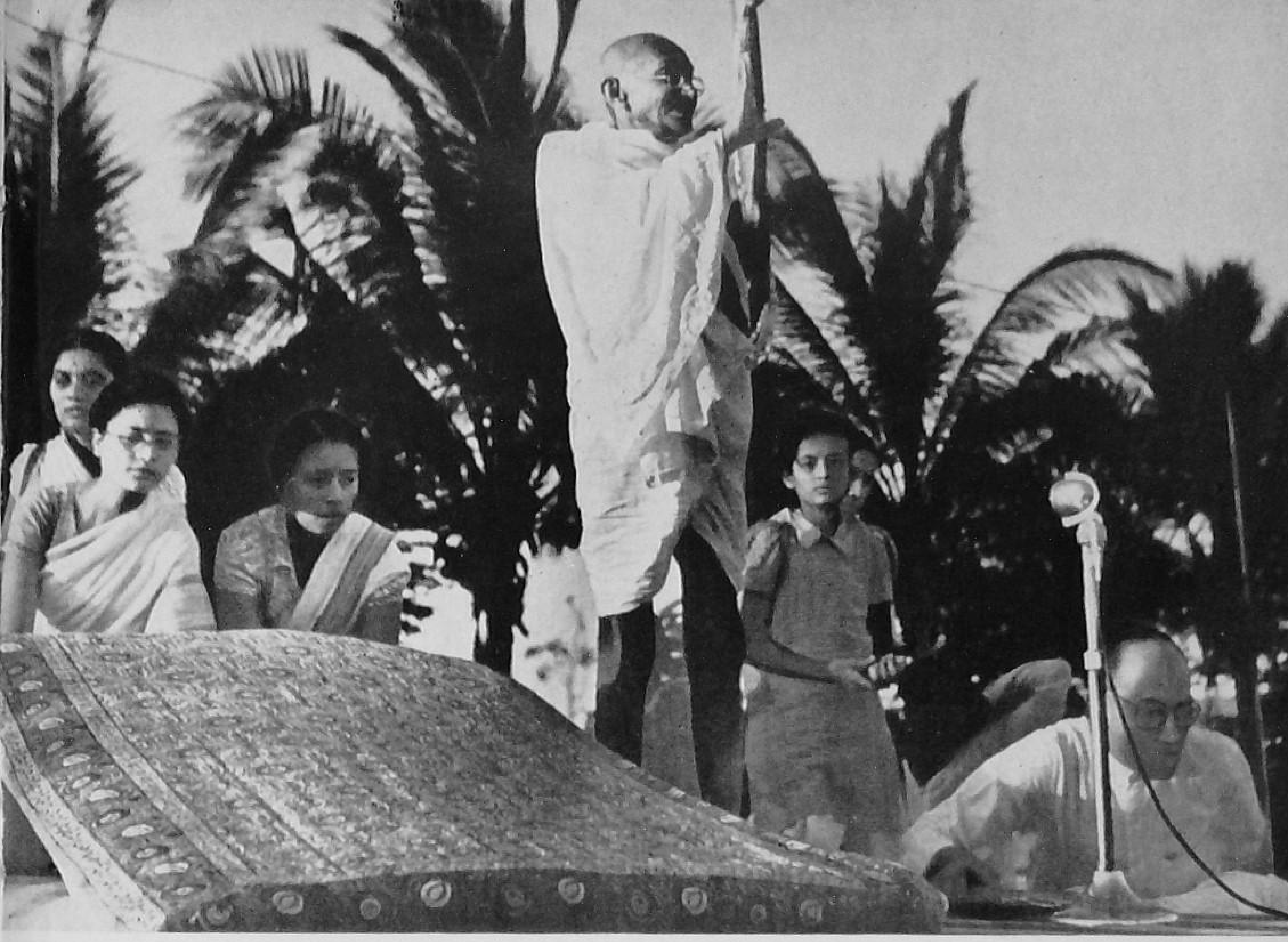
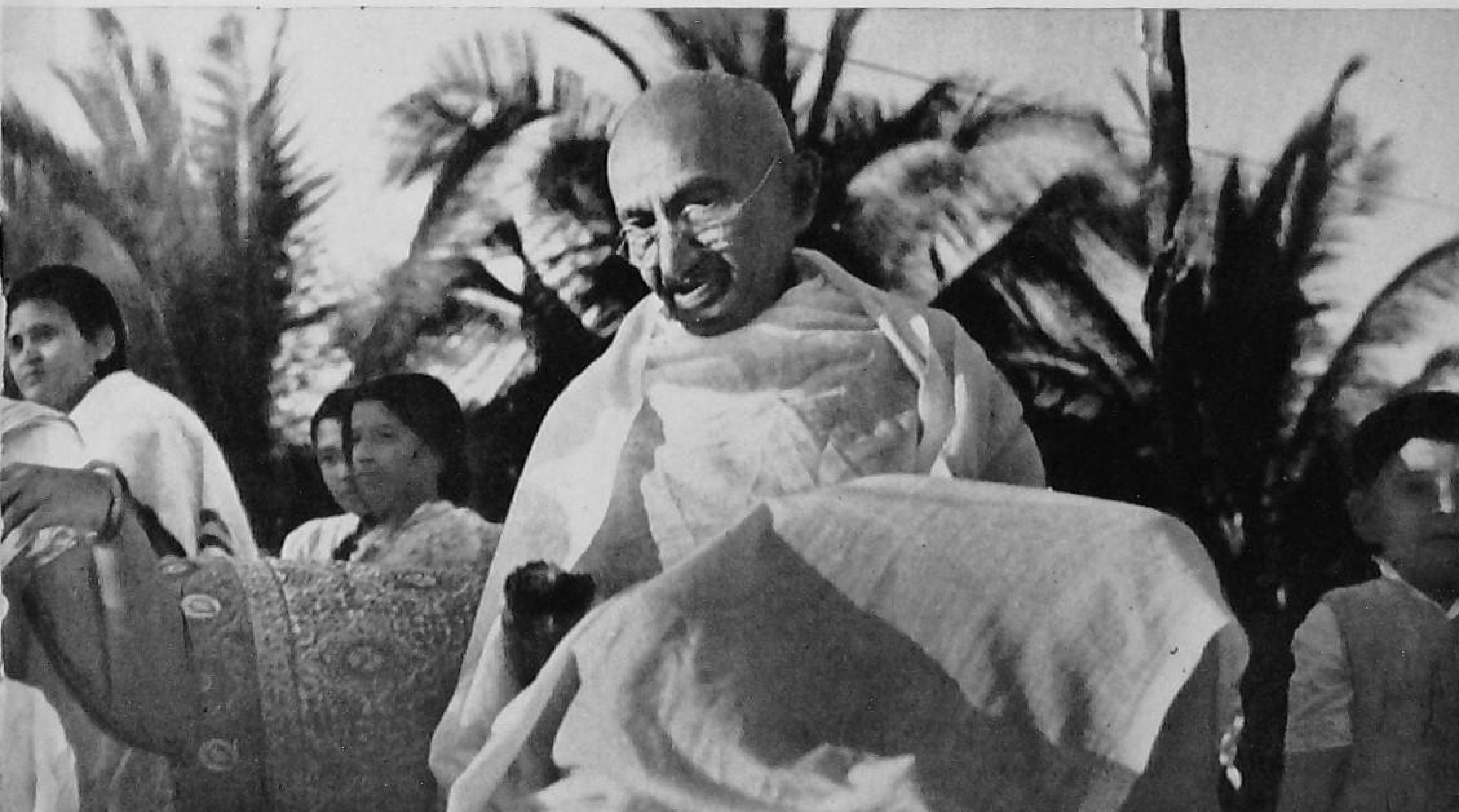
Conference, Madras, January 24, 1946

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

On the occasion of Silver Jubilee celebration of the Hindi Prachar Sabha, Madras, January 25, 1946





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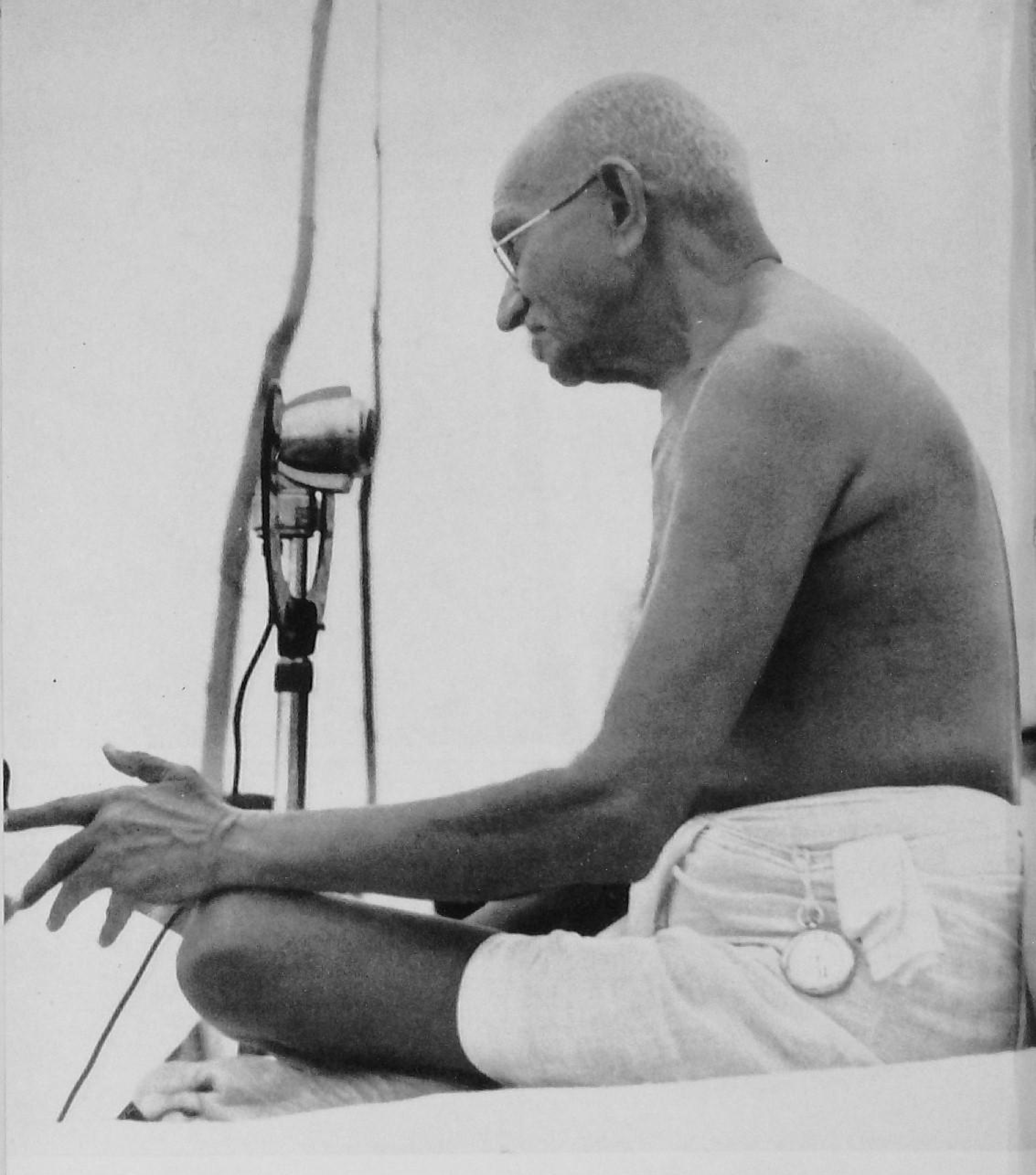
At a prayer meeting in Madras, January 1946



*Courtesy: News Photo Flash*

Addressing a prayer meeting in Madras on Independence Day, January 26, 1946

only bring ridicule on those who offered it. The true prayer must transform their conduct.

In conformity with the previous announcement, Gandhi told the gathering that he had not only discontinued giving any translations, whether in Telugu or Tamil, of his remarks at the end of the prayer, even the song was in Hindustani, because he did not want to make the language of the song a bone of contention.

Gandhi strongly deprecated the rivalry and recrimination between the Tamilians and Andhras, which he had noticed during his visit to the south. The Tamilians and the Andhras, the Kanarese and the Malayalese were distinct, but not antagonistic to one another. They were like the branches of the same tree. They should realize the fundamental unity underlying their diversity. Then alone, they would be worthy of independence.

Presiding over the convocation of the Hindi Prachar Sabha on January 27, Gandhi stated: "Today you have come to know that the *rashtrabhasha* is Hindustani and not Hindi. It should be written in both the Urdu and Devanagari scripts. The *rashtrabhasha* cannot be English or any other language but Hindustani. The language which is spoken in northern India is in two forms. It should not have been like that, but it is so. Hindustani, however, can be compared to a stomach, which is so big that it can take both Hindi and Urdu within itself."

In between the heavy round of engagements in Madras, there were a number of light interludes. These had to take place during the few minutes when he walked to and back from his meetings. On one occasion, there was a group of discharged Indonesian sailors, who waited on Gandhi about the same time that Mr. Van Mook had landed in Madras on the way to Batavia. The sailors had refused to man their posts, when their ship was ordered to proceed to Batavia with personnel and cargo, ostensibly meant to be used against the nationalist struggle there, and had in consequence been discharged. They wanted India's sympathy and co-operation in their cause and they complained about the use of the Indian troops to suppress the Indonesians. Gandhi informed them that Indian sympathy they had already, as was shown by the resolution of the Working Committee on Indonesia and the Far East. As for the use of the Indian troops against them, it was as much India's and Britain's shame as their misfortune. It could end only by India gaining her independence,

which would be the forerunner of the emancipation of all the suppressed and exploited races of the earth.

Then there was a group of I. N. A. men. "We worked under Netaji's guidance," they said. "Whose lead should we now follow?" Gandhi told them that they could only follow the lead of the Congress. "You should remember," he added, "that it is unbecoming the dignity of a soldier to depend on anybody's charity. As soldiers of freedom, you should earn your bread by your honest industry and disdain to look to others for support, even though you may have to suffer hardships and privations in consequence."

There was a group of Negro soldiers from West Africa. They had come to Gandhi with a long list of questions. The first question was: "There are several religions in the world. They were all originated in foreign countries. Which one of these should Africa follow? Or should she discover her own religion? If so, how?"

"It is wrong to say," observed Gandhi, "that all religions were originated in foreign countries. I had fairly extensive contact with Zulus and Bantus and I found that the Africans have a religion of their own, though they may not have reasoned it out for themselves. I am not referring to the rites, the ceremonies and the fetishes that are prevalent among African tribes, but the religion of one Supreme God. You pray to that God. There are many religions, but Religion is only one. You should follow that one Religion. Foreigners might bring you Christianity. Christianity, as exemplified in Europe and America today, is a travesty of the teaching of Jesus. Then there are Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and so on. You should absorb the best that is in each, without fettering your choice, and form your own religion."

They quoted his observation that to remain in slavery is beneath the dignity of man. "How can a continent like Africa fight down the fetters of slavery, when it is so hopelessly divided," they asked.

"I know your difficulty," remarked Gandhi. "If you think of the vast size of Africa, the distance and natural obstacles separating its various parts, the scattered condition of its people, and the terrible divisions among them, then the task might well appear to be hopeless. But there is a charm which can overcome all these handicaps. The moment, the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. He frees himself and shows the way to others. Freedom and slavery are mental states. Therefore, the first thing is to say to

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yourself: 'I shall no longer accept the role of a slave. I shall not obey orders as such, but I shall disobey them when they are in conflict with my conscience.' The so-called master may lash you and may try to force you to serve him. You will say: 'No, I will not serve you for your money or under a threat.' This may mean suffering. Your readiness to suffer will light the torch of freedom, which can never be put out."

"Africa and India both drink of the cup of slavery. What necessary steps can be taken to unite the two nations, so as to present a common front?" asked the Negro soldiers.

"You are right," replied Gandhi. "India is not yet free and yet the Indians have begun to realize that their freedom is coming, not because the white man says so, but because they have developed the power within. Inasmuch as India's struggle is non-violent, it is a struggle for the emancipation of all the oppressed races against superior might. I do not propose mechanical joint action between them. 'Each one has to find his own salvation' is true of this, as well as of the other world. It is enough that there is a real moral bond between Asiatics and Africans. It will grow, as time passes."

They wanted to know as to how they could set up stalls of useful Indian books and what India could give them and how they could achieve "co-operative industrialization" in order to be saved from the terrible exploitation under which they were suffering.

"India can give you good ideas," said Gandhi. "It can give you books of universal worth. The commerce between India and Africa will be of ideas and services, not of the manufactured goods against raw materials, after the fashion of western exploiters. Then, India can offer you the spinning wheel. If I had discovered it when I was in South Africa, I would have introduced it among the Africans who were my neighbours in Phoenix. You can grow cotton. You have ample leisure and plenty of manual skill. You should study and adopt the lesson of the village crafts we are trying to revive. Therein lies the key to your salvation."

On January 29 he was asked a few questions in the Constructive Workers' Conference at Madras.

Question: "Please explain to us the meaning of *samagra gramaseva* of your conception. How can we fit ourselves for that?

Gandhi: "The eighteen-fold constructive programme includes *samagra gramaseva*. The *samagra gramasevak* should know everybody

living in the village and render them such service as he can. That does not mean that the worker will be able to do everything single-handed. He will show them the way of helping themselves, and will procure for them such help and materials as they require. He will train up his own helpers. He will so win over the villagers, that they will seek and follow his advice. Supposing I go and settle down in a village with a *ghani* (village oil press), I will not be an ordinary *ghanchi* (oil presser), earning fifteen to twenty rupees a month. I will be a mahatma *ghanchi*. I have used the word 'mahatma' in fun, but what I mean to say is that as a *ghanchi* I will become a model for the villagers to follow. I will be a *ghanchi* who knows the Gita and the Koran, I will be learned enough to teach their children. I may not be able to do so for lack of time. The villagers will come to me and ask me: 'Please, make arrangements for our children's education.' I will tell them, 'I can find you a teacher, but you will have to bear the expenses.' And they will be prepared to do so most willingly. I will teach them spinning and, when they come and ask me for the services of a weaver, I will find them a weaver on the same terms as I found them a teacher. And the weaver will teach them how to weave their own cloth. I will inculcate in them the importance of hygiene and sanitation. When they come and ask me for a sweeper I will tell them, 'I will be your sweeper and I will train you all in the job.' This is my conception of *samagra gramaseva*. You may tell me that I will never find a *ghanchi* of this description in this age. Then I will say that we cannot hope to improve our villages in this age. Take the example of a *ghanchi* in Russia. After all, the man who runs an oil mill is a *ghanchi*. He has money, but his strength lies in knowledge. And true knowledge gives a moral standing and moral strength. Everyone seeks the advice of such a man. Take the instance of Vinoba. He is a good *ghanchi*. You all know what he does and you can all follow his example according to your capacity."

"What do you mean by economic equality and what is statutory trusteeship as conceived by you?" was the next question.

Gandhi replied that the economic equality of his conception did not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount. It simply meant that everybody should have enough for his or her own needs. For instance, he required two shawls in winter, whereas his grand-nephew Kanu did not require any warm clothing whatsoever. He required goat's milk, oranges and other fruit. But Kanu could do

with ordinary food. He envied Kanu but there was no point in it. Kanu was a young man, whereas he was an old man of seventy-six. The monthly expense of his food was far more than that of Kanu, but that did not mean that there was economic inequality between them. The elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So, the real meaning of economic equality was: "To each according to his need." That was the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with a wife and four children, that would be a violation of the economic equality.

Then he added: "Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument. The contrast between the rich and poor, as exists today, is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen, the city dwellers. They produce food and they go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for education of one's children and adequate medical relief." That constituted Gandhi's picture of economic equality. He did not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessaries, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first.

As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between the class war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the nation and, therefore, without exploitation. The state would regulate the rate of commission, which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship, only if they proved their fitness for it.

"Supposing, India becomes a free country tomorrow," he stated, "all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees. But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship, and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves beginning with *gram* panchayats, will begin to introduce

such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above, it is liable to prove a dead weight."

Question: "What is the real difference between your technique and that of the communists or the socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality?"

Gandhi: "The socialists and communists say they can do nothing to bring about the economic equality today. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour and to that end they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say, when they get control over the state, they will enforce equality. Under my plan, the state will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or to force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view, but, will straight away make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about the economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor-cars or even of ten bighas of land. For that, I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost communist, although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it."

Question: "What is the place of satyagraha in making the rich realize their duty towards the poor?"

Gandhi: "The same as against the foreign power. Satyagraha is a law of universal application. Beginning with the family, its use can be extended to every other circle. Supposing, a landowner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him, he does not listen and raises objections that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants or those who have espoused their cause and have influence will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

"Supposing further, that he listens to nobody, or that his wife and his children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They

will quit if asked to do so, but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It, however, may be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue, till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. The satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion, such that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure."

Gandhi ended his two months' tour through Bengal, Assam and Madras with a visit to the temples at Madura and Palni. His visit to these ancient temples, now thrown open to the untouchables, was in the nature of a triumphal entry—a happy result of his long crusade against untouchability. The steam engine which carried him from Madras was decorated with flowers and the Tricolour. Till now, the special trains in which he travelled consisted of third class coaches, but this time he was provided with a saloon. The cushions, however, were removed, according to his wishes. The saloon had a platform from where he could address the people; it also had loudspeaker arrangement.

On the way, Gandhi addressed the people from his coach and told them that he was on his way to Madura and Palni in the cause of anti-untouchability, that he wanted their prayers and blessings on his mission, that he was collecting money for the Harijan Fund, but that they must not give any money, unless they had rooted out untouchability from their hearts. Mere gifts were not enough.

On February 3, Gandhi visited the Meenakshi temple. The crowds that attended the evening prayer at Madura numbered over five lakhs. Some of them had come from distant villages. The temple at Palni he visited the following day and entered the holy precincts in company with Harijans.

On leaving Palni, Gandhi wrote:

"The vast meeting at Palni, under the shadow of the temple, was perfectly silent; there were no noises. I seized the occasion to give the audience the implications of removal of untouchability. It began with touch, but it would be a wooden thing, if it merely ended there. A Brahmin may be a depraved man, in spite of his learning. It would be preposterous to call him one. A Brahmin is he who knows

Brahma. It is character, not occupation, that determines the man. The bhangi is or should be on a par with the Brahmin in all social relations. There is no reason why he should not, other things being equal, occupy the chair which Maulana Abul Kalam Azad occupies with distinction. I would be happy to see the day when a bhangi, working as such, is in the presidential chair.

"The ulcer of untouchability has gone so deep down that it seems to pervade our life. Hence the unreal differences: Brahmin and non-Brahmin, provinces and provinces, religion and religion. Why should there be all this poison smelling of untouchability? Why should we not all be children of one Indian family and, further, of one human family? Are we not like branches of the same tree?

"When untouchability is rooted out, these distinctions will vanish and no one will consider himself superior to any other. Naturally, the exploitation too will cease, and co-operation will be the order of the day.

"Having dealt with untouchability, I turned to the pilgrimage. There was fear of my being unable to negotiate the flight of over six hundred steps on a chair, if crowds of people insisted on accompanying me up the hill, which was too small to accommodate them. I would be satisfied with doing *darshan* at the foot of the hill. Let not the people, however, think that I was guided by any belief in the potency of the images of clay or precious metal. Idols became what the devotees made of, or imputed to, them. For me, they had no potency, whilst Harijans were prohibited from entering temples. I had passed by the famous Meenakshi Temple in Madura more than once before and never cared to go inside it, whilst the prohibition against the Harijans lasted. How could I, who claim to be a bhangi, care to enter such temples? Then, I was sure that the God of India was God living in the plains, where the millions lived. How many could reach the Himalayas? Many have gone and more could certainly go to Palni, but the crores could not. I would be, as I am, one of them.

"I was certain too that my prayer at the foot of the hill would be heard more than that of some devotees in the temple itself. God knew and cared for the hearts of men. Outward appearance was nothing to Him, if it was not an expression of the inner. It was enough for me that the Harijans were as free as any other Hindu to enter the Palni temple for the purpose of worship.

"Nevertheless, the millions, who were assured that I would have *darshan* of the image, would not understand this message and might feel that some calamity would descend upon the country, if I could not go up the hill. Their silence at the meeting encouraged the hope that I might be able to go through the advertised programme.

"The speech was delivered at nearly 6 p.m. But at 8 p.m. I found that I was able to negotiate the hill, and though there was a large crowd at the entrance, none insisted on joining, while Rajaji and I were being taken up the hill in chairs. Thus happily did the pilgrimage come to a successful end.

"One swallow does not make a summer. No legitimate inference can be drawn from this incident. However, I cannot help cherishing the fond hope that it augurs well for India under swaraj. Home Rule or independence, by whatever name one may choose to call the thing."

On the way to Wardha, Gandhi wrote on Hindustani:

"How can any Indian really be averse to Hindustani? Lovers of Sanskritized Hindi are, however, afraid that Hindustani will hurt Hindi, and likewise lovers of Persianized Urdu fear hurt to Urdu. These fears are futile. No language can spread through mere propaganda. If it had been so, the Esperanto would have found a place amongst the populace in the West. They failed, because in such a matter the enthusiasm of only a few cannot succeed. The language of a people, who produce hard workers, literary experts, business men and enterprising persons, spreads and is enriched. It is ours to make the effort in that direction.

"Only that language, which the people of a country will themselves adopt, can become national. However virile the English language may be, it can never become the language of the masses of India. If the British regime were to be permanent, English would continue to be the official language of their Indian officials, and because education would be in their hands, the provincial languages would suffer. The late Lokamanya Tilak once said that the British had done a service to the provincial languages. This is true to some extent. But it was not their business to encourage them, nor could they in reality do so. The work belongs to the people and to their leaders. If the English-educated neglect, as they have done and even now continue, as some do, to be ignorant of their mother tongue, linguistic starvation will abide.

"We are today certain that the British raj cannot remain for ever. They say and we believe that it will go even this year. Then there can be no national language for us other than Hindustani. Today there are two forms of this language—Hindi and Urdu, the former written in the Nagari and the latter in the Urdu script. One is fed by Sanskrit, the latter is by Persian and Arabic. Today, therefore, both must remain. But Hindustani will be a mixture of these. What shape it will take in the future, none can say, nor need we know. Twenty-three crores out of thirty speak Hindustani. This number must have increased *pari passu* with the population. Obviously in this lies the national language.

"There ought to be no quarrel between the two sisters—Hindi and Urdu. The rivalry is with English. This struggle itself means much labour. The rise of Hindustani will also give an impetus to the provincial languages, because it is the language of the masses, not of a handful of officials.

"It was for the propaganda of the national language that I went recently to the south. The name Hindi used there up till now has been changed to Hindustani. During the last few months, several persons have been learning both the scripts and have obtained the certificates. In the south too, the difficulty is not about these two scripts, but in regard to English. But we may not blame the official world for this. The fault lies in us. It is we who are infatuated with English. I found this disease even in Hindustani Nagar. But I hope that the illusion will now disappear. A good deal has been done in the south, but still remains to reach the desired goal."

At the Bezwada station, Gandhi was told that there was a belief in Andhra Desh that he had gone to Madras with a view to make Rajagopalachari a premier. "My visit has nothing to do with Rajaji being the premier," said Gandhi. "If I wanted to give an opinion, I was in the habit of giving it openly. But I had rejected the advances of friends to guide them, for I was not interested in the elections and the offices. But since I was challenged, I had no hesitation in saying that Rajaji was by far the best man for the purpose in the southern presidency and, if I had the disposal in my hands, I would call Rajaji to office, if I did not give it to myself. But the disposal was with the provincial Congress committee and finally with the Working Committee of the Congress. My opinion was only that of an individual, to be taken for it was worth."

On the lure of legislatures, Gandhi wrote in *Harijan:*

"I believe that some Congressmen ought to seek election in the legislatures or other elected bodies. In the past, I did not hold this view. I had hoped that boycott of legislatures would be complete. That was not to be. Moreover, times have changed. Swaraj seems to be near. Under the circumstances, it is necessary that the Congress should contest every seat in the legislatures. The attraction should never be the honour that a seat in a legislature is said to give. The desire and opportunity for service can be the only incentive for a Congressman. Congress should have, and has, such a prestige that a Congress candidate is irresistible even where a particular seat is contested. Moreover, those that are not selected by the board should not feel hurt. On the contrary, they should feel happy that they are left free to render more useful service. But the painful fact is that those who are not selected by the board do feel hurt.

"The Congress should not have to spend money on the elections. Nominees of a popular organization should be elected without any effort on the latter's part. Conveyance arrangements for poor voters should be made by their well-to-do neighbours. That is the distinguishing feature of a well organized, non-violent, popular organization. An organization which looks to money for everything can never serve the masses. If money could bring success in a popular contest, the British Government, which can and does spend most lavishly, should be the most popular body in India. The facts are that even Government servants drawing fat salaries do not, in their heart of hearts, want the British Government.

"Let us examine the utility value of legislatures. The legislatures can expose the Government, but that is the least service. He who can tell the people why they become victims of the Government in spite of knowing its faults, and teach them how to stand up against Government wrong renders a real service. The members cannot do this essential service, for their business is to make the people look to them for the redress of wrongs.

"The other use of legislatures is to prevent undesirable legislation and bring in laws which are useful to the public, so that as much help as possible can be given to the constructive programme.

"Legislatures are supposed to carry out the popular will. For the moment, eloquence may be of some use in these bodies. Ultimately that will not be the need. The experts with practical knowledge and

those who can give to these few their support will be required. In an organization which exists for the sake of service and which has boycotted titles and other such paltry things, the sentiment that to be selected as candidates for the legislatures is a mark of honour is harmful. If such a sentiment takes root, it will bring down the name of the Congress and finally prove its ruin.

"If Congressmen are to be reduced to such degradation, who will put flesh and blood into India's millions of skeletons? On whom will India and the world rely?"

Personal likes and dislikes, ambitions and jealousies should have no place in Congress organization, he emphasized in a note written in *Harijan:* "Or else swaraj machinery will crack and go to pieces and our future state may very well become worse than the present, bad and insufferable as it is. As I said in Mahishadal, the glow of swaraj in action must be felt by the illiterate millions. They must feel the vital difference between the present autocratic and ordinance regime and the orderly democratic non-violent regime under swaraj. I hug the hope that when real responsibility comes to the people and the dead weight of a foreign army of occupation is removed, we shall be natural, dignified and restrained. We are living just now in a state that is highly artificial and unnatural. The sooner we get out of it, the better for us, the ruling power and the world."

On February 10, 1946 *Harijan* was revived after the lapse of three years and a half. Gandhi wrote:

"Many readers, including the English and American, had all along felt a void, and they began to feel it more after the defeat of the fascist powers. The reason for the feeling was obvious. They wanted my reaction, in terms of truth and non-violence, to the various events happening in India, if not in the world. I wished to satisfy this desire.

"There has been cataclysmic changes in the world. Do I adhere still to my faith in truth and non-violence? Has not the atom bomb exploded that faith? Not only has it not done so, but it has clearly demonstrated to me that the twins constitute the mightiest force in the world. Before it, the atom bomb is of no effect. The two opposing forces are wholly different in kind, the one moral and spiritual, the other physical and material. The one is infinitely superior to the other, which by its very nature has an end. The force of spirit is ever progressive and endless. Its full expression makes it unconquerable

in the world. In saying this, I know that I have said nothing new. I merely bear witness to the fact. What is more, that force resides in everybody, man, woman and child, irrespective of the colour of the skin. Only, in many, it lies dormant, but it is capable of being awakened by judicious training.

"It is further to be observed that without the recognition of this truth and without due effort to realize it, there is no escape from self-destruction. The remedy lies in every individual training himself for self-expression in every walk of life, irrespective of response by the neighbours. *Harijan* will attempt from week to week to stand for this truth and illustrate it."

All articles for the first issue of *Harijan* were written by Gandhi on the train itself, five days before their publication. But there was difficulty of despatch. As to how it was overcome, Pyarelal wrote:

"Despatching of matter for the *Harijan* weeklies always used to be a bit of an exciting adventure, when Gandhiji used to be constantly on the move. It involved pouring over railway maps and columns of Bradshaw and Indian Post and Telegraph Guide, checking up of train timings and train connections, not to mention the exigencies of late arrivals and erratic habits of certain trains. It made some of Gandhiji's staff fair experts in the arcana of Indian postal lore. For instance, Gandhiji could tell with exact precision the time the post would take to be delivered at a particular place by the various alternative routes. Once in the course of Gandhi-Irwin negotiations a question arose, as to whether a particular letter which Lord Irwin had sent to Gandhiji had been despatched in time. Lord Irwin maintained that it must have been. 'Then it ought to have reached me before I left Bardoli,' replied Gandhiji. 'You better make an inquiry in your office. There is bound to have been some despatching delay.' And so in the end it proved to be.

"But all his precision availed nothing this time before the vagaries of the special train which brought us to Wardha from Madras. It was scheduled to reach Wardha at 5 p.m. The mail left Wardha at 6.10 p.m. From Madras to Madura and Palni and back was a giddy whirl of distractions for Gandhiji and he did the bulk of his writing during the train journey to Wardha. We had counted upon posting part of the copy from Wardha. On the morning of February 5, he called me. 'Are we running to time?' he asked. 'There was an unnecessary forty minutes' delay at Bezwada and at Kazipet.'

" 'It is true,' I said. 'We are already two hours behind time. The delay I am told was owing to the difficulty in clearing the crowds at the stations named.'

" 'Let me have a list of train stoppages at once,' he said. 'Let us see, whether we can't eliminate some of them to make up for the lost time.' I ran to the guard and explained to him the situation.

" 'Sorry,' he replied. 'Only two more stoppages. One is the reversing station, the other the watering station.'

"All the same when he came to report to Gandhiji a few minutes later, he solemnly promised to 'try' to take the train to Wardha in time. It was, however, clear that his offer was to be taken only in the Pickwickian sense. There were 238 miles yet to be covered, and even at the rate of forty miles per hour and without any stoppage it would need six hours. By that time, it would be 8 p.m. So we gave up all further striving. Apparently, the train staff took the cue from us and the train arrived at Wardha at 11.45 at night.

"What was to be done? Get the matter sent by air from Bombay? But the plane takes off from Bombay before the arrival of the mail these days.' Let us send copies of all the articles to Bombay and get the first issue of *Harijan* weeklies printed there,' Gandhiji suggested. 'I once did like that in Phoenix in the case of *Indian Opinion.*' "

" 'But what about despatch? We have not got the subscribers' registers.' So that was that.

" 'Let us try to send all articles including Hindustani and Gujarati by wire,' I suggested.

" 'Then put Hindustani and Gujarati articles in Roman script.'

"I spent the whole of the morning at this thankless task. But, in the meantime, Kanu Gandhi had a brain wave. 'Send the English articles by wire and the rest by a special messenger. He will reach there one day late, but if the *Harijan* work begins earlier, the press will be able to catch up with the rest.' And so a special messenger was sent, and the first issue of the three weeklies was once more brought out in time after all the misadventures."

## *Critical Days*

### 1946

THE GRIM spectre of the impending famine haunted Gandhi's mind after his return from Madras. He had premonitions of the coming danger whilst he was in Bengal itself, and what he learnt about the conditions in Bihar and in Madras disturbed him even more. He took the opportunity to discuss the question with the Governor of Madras, but did not come away from the talk reassured. The situation called for the co-operation of all concerned and Mr. Abell, the private secretary to the Viceroy, was agreeably surprised to find, when he flew to Sevagram on February 11, 1946, that Gandhi had anticipated his proposals in an article for *Harijan* written on the previous day. The article read as follows:

"During my wanderings in Bengal, Assam and Madras, I heard the tales of distress due to shortage of food and cloth. Reports come to me from other parts of India. They support the same tale. Dr. Rajendra Prasad tells me that the Government report expressing the fear of shortage of food immediately doubled the market price. This is a bad sign. Such speculation should be a thing of the past. The mercantile community should now be competent to curb such greed. Let them not add to the distress caused by the Government mistakes or incompetence. There are mercantile associations and chambers. If they act patriotically, they can help most to prevent panic and speculation.

"It is the fashion to blame nature for famine. Scarcity of rain is by no means a monopoly of India. In other countries, though the people welcome rains, they have made themselves fairly independent of rainfall during a season or two. Here, the Government have used themselves and the public to the idea that famines come when there is a shortage of waterfall. Had the mind been framed otherwise, they would have made adequate provision for shortfalls. The Government only tinkered with the problem and naturally so. For,

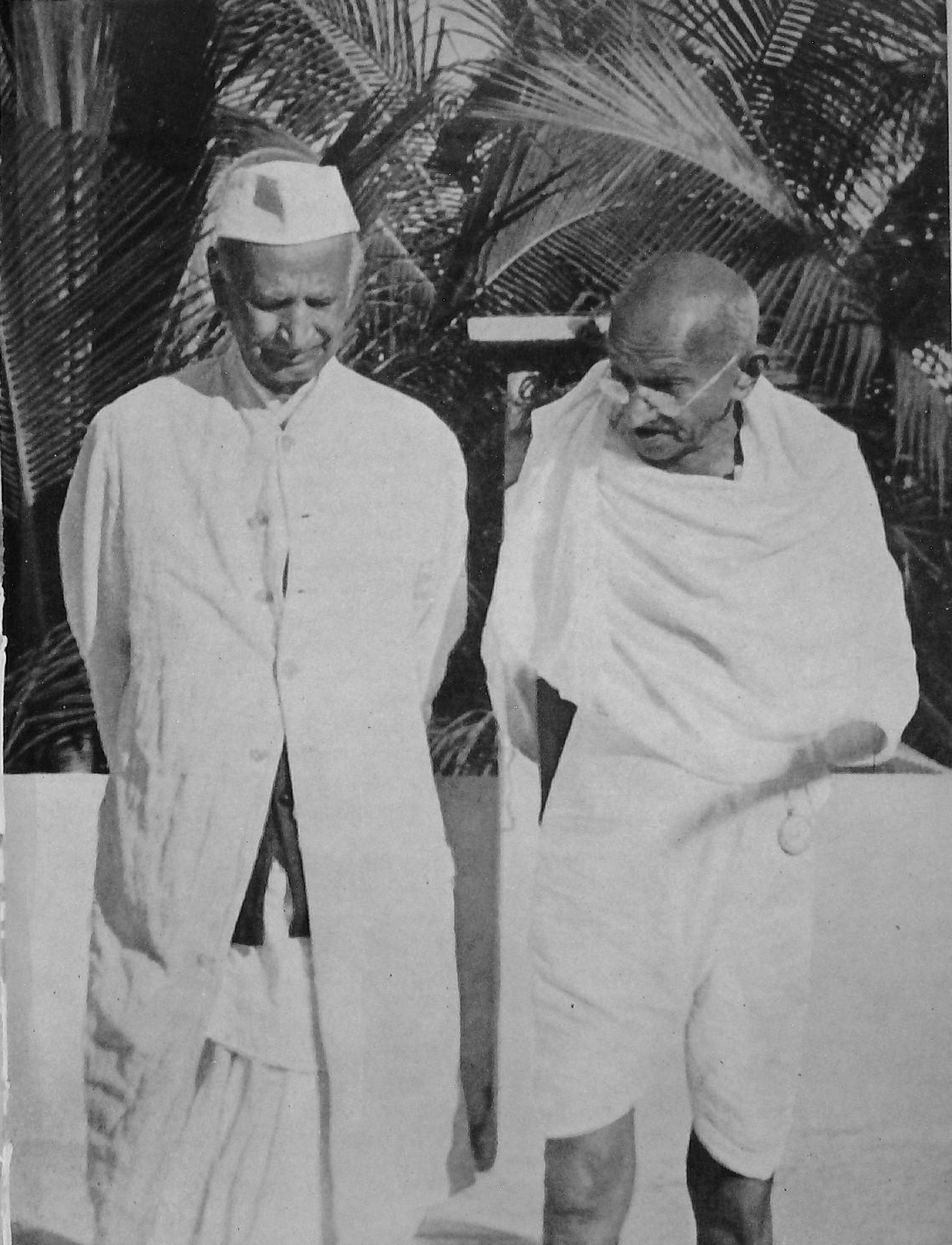
official world was taught to think no better. Originality there could be none in a close monopoly organization like the Government of India. It is the largest autocracy the world has known. Democracy has been reserved only for Great Britain. And when it rules and it exploits millions belonging to the other races, it becomes an unmitigated evil. It corrupts the whole island with the idea that such exploitation is the best thing for an enlightened democracy to do. It would be well to remember this fundamental fact, if I have correctly estimated it. If we recognize this, while dealing with the immediate problem, we shall be patient with the present actors. There is no call here for patience with the evil. The distinction will enable us the better to deal with the evil.

"We must then first put our own house in order as far as may be, and at the same time demand from the foreign Government that since they mean what they say, let them at once replace the irresponsible executive with elected and responsible members from the central legislature, however archaic, and based only on a limited franchise it may be. There is nothing to prevent the Viceroy from doing this today. I do not propose to answer the difficulties in anticipation. 'Where there's a will, there's a way.' This one act will restore confidence and allay panic.

" 'Grow more food' was not a bad cry during the war. It is a greater necessity now. And this can be best done only by a national executive. Even its mistakes will not loom so large as those of a nominated executive, however able the latter may be. As it is, even their ability and integrity are in question—rightly so or wrongly is beside the point in this connection. Everything possible should be done to draw water from the bowels of the earth. There is talent enough in this country for the purpose. Provincial selfishness should give place to the national want.

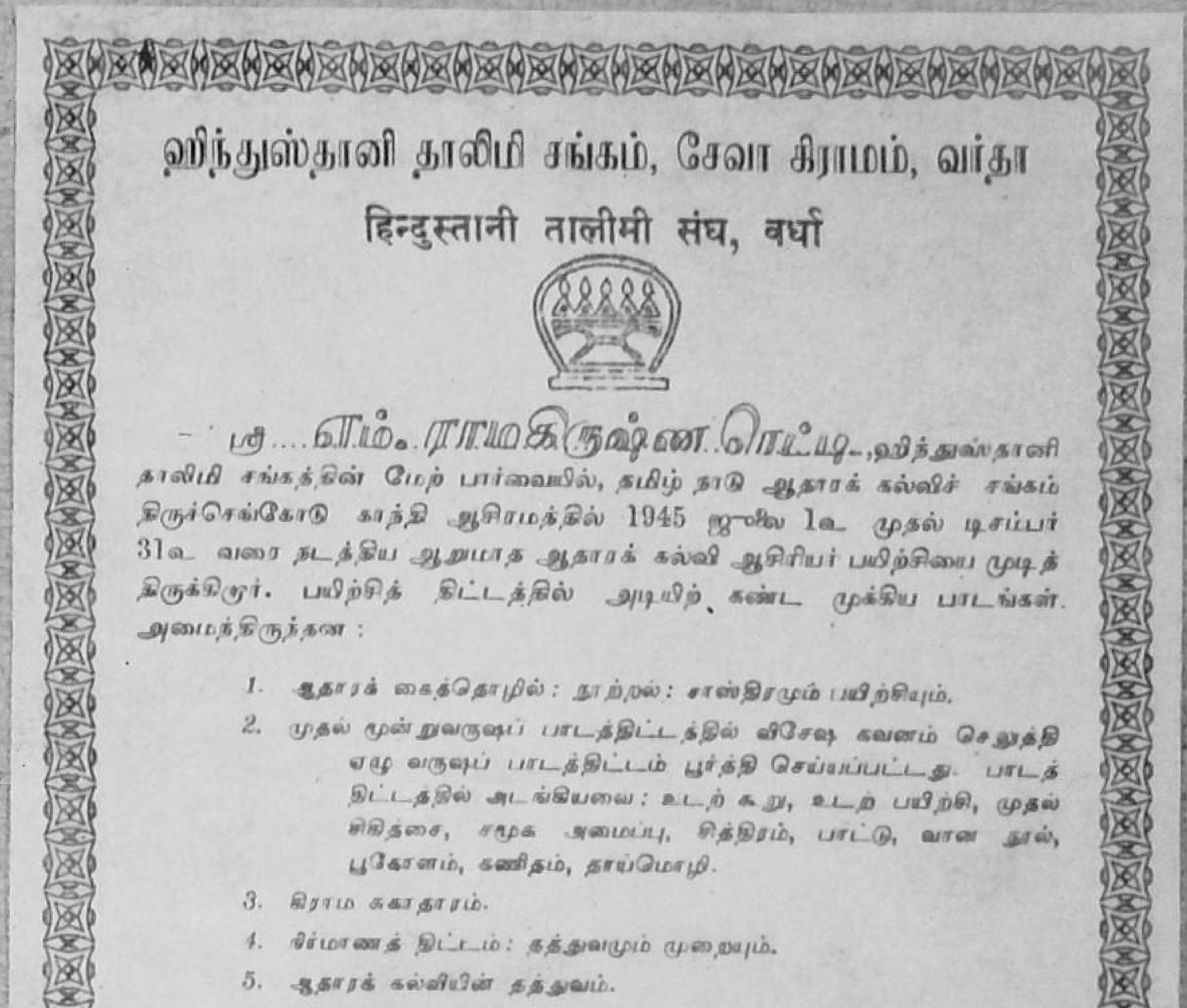
"In addition to, not in the place of these measures, grain should be imported from wherever it can be had.

"Cloth famine can and ought to be averted by telling the millions to spin and weave in their own villages, the state supplying them with cotton, where it is not grown or available, and with the simple instruments of production on hire or on long-term purchase. The A.-I.S.A. with its seasoned workers should be summoned to render assistance and guidance. This will take a few months, if the work is taken up in earnest. Indigenous mills will be called upon to assist



Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

With Thakkar Bapa in Madras, January 1946


ஹிந்துஸ்தானி தாலிமி சங்கம், சேவா கிராமம், வர்தா

हिन्दुस्तानी तालीमी संघ, वर्धा

ஸ்ரீ ....எம். ராமகிருஷ்ண ரெட்டி, ஹிந்துஸ்தானி தாலிமி சங்கத்தின் மேற்பார்வையில், தமிழ் நாடு ஆதாரக் கல்விச் சங்கம் திருச்செங்கோடு காந்தி ஆசிரமத்தில் 1945 ஜூலை 1உ முதல் டிசம்பர் 31உ வரை நடத்திய ஆறுமாத ஆதாரக் கல்வி ஆசிரியர் பயிற்சியை முடித்திருக்கிறார். பயிற்சித் திட்டத்தில் அடியிற் கண்ட முக்கிய பாடங்கள் அமைந்திருந்தன :

1. ஆதாரக் கைத்தொழில் : நூற்றல் : சாஸ்திரமும் பயிற்சியும்.
2. முதல் மூன்று வருஷப் பாடத்திட்டத்தில் விசேஷ கவனம் செலுத்தி ஏழு வருஷப் பாடத்திட்டம் பூர்த்தி செய்யப்பட்டது. பாடத் திட்டத்தில் அடங்கியவை : உடற் கூறு, உடற் பயிற்சி, முதல் சிகிச்சை, சமூக அமைப்பு, சித்திரம், பாட்டு, வான நூல், பூகோளம், கணிதம், தாய்மொழி.
3. கிராம சுகாதாரம்.
4. நிர்மாணத் திட்டம் : தத்துவமும் முறையும்.
5. ஆதாரக் கல்வியின் தத்துவம்.
6. இணைப்பு முறையில் போதனைப் பயிற்சி.
7. குழந்தையின் மனோதத்துவம்.
8. ஹிந்துஸ்தானி.
9. விவசாயம்.

ஏழு வகுப்புகள் அடங்கிய ஆதாரக் கல்வித் திட்டத்தில் முதல் மூன்று வகுப்புக் குழந்தைகளுக்குக் கற்றுக்கொடுக்க இவர் தகுந்த திறமை பெற்றிருக்கிறார்.

உதவி காரியதரிசி,
ஹிந்துஸ்தானி தாலிமி சங்கம்,
29—1—1946.

*Courtesy : M. Ramakrishna Reddi*

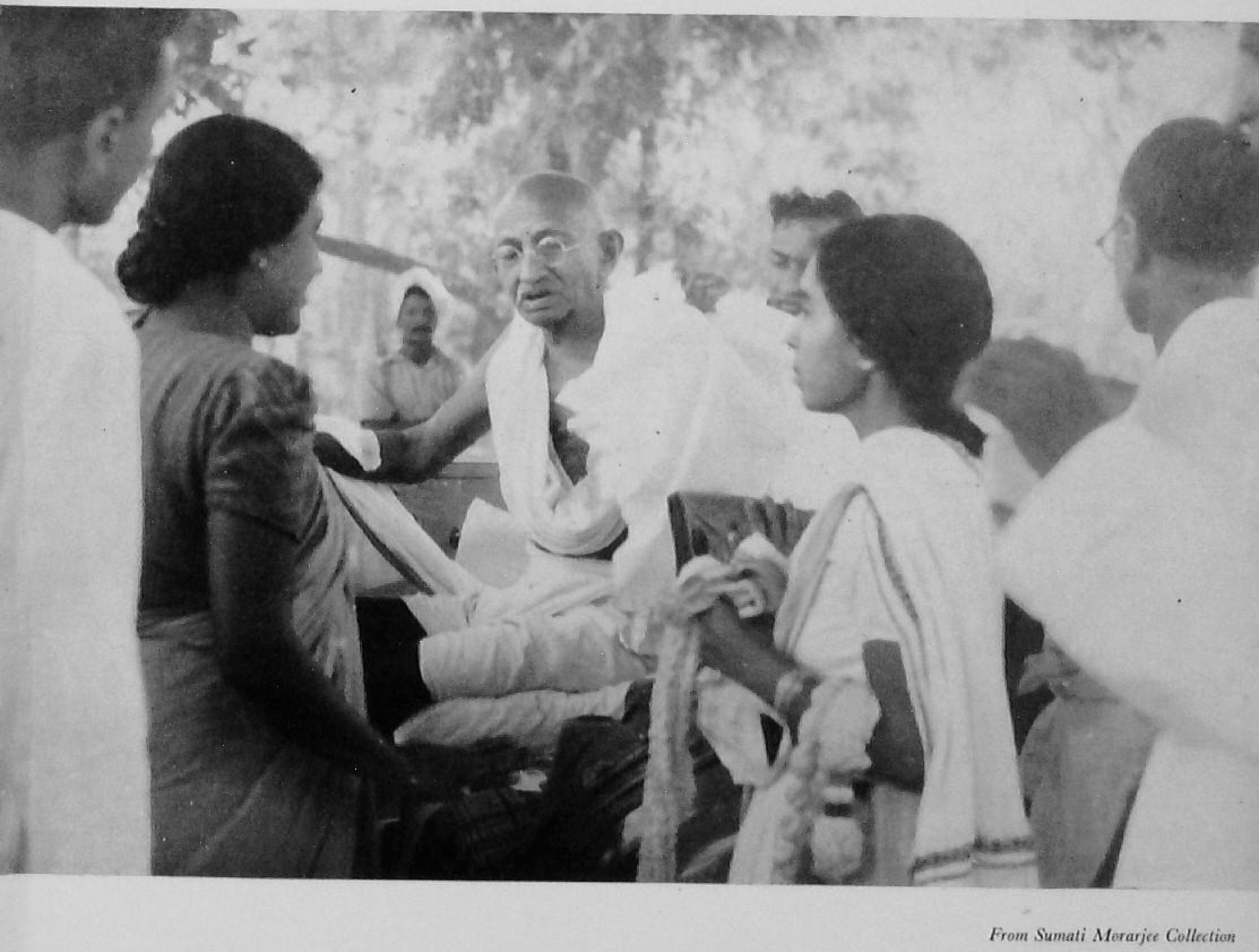
A certificate in Tamil to a Basic Education teacher on behalf of Hindustani Talimi Sangh signed by Gandhi, dated January 29, 1946

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

"Gandhiji Special", decorated with Tricolour and flowers, carrying Gandhi from Madras to Madura and Palni where the ancient temples were now thrown open to the untouchables, February 1946

*Photograph: S. S. Aiyer*

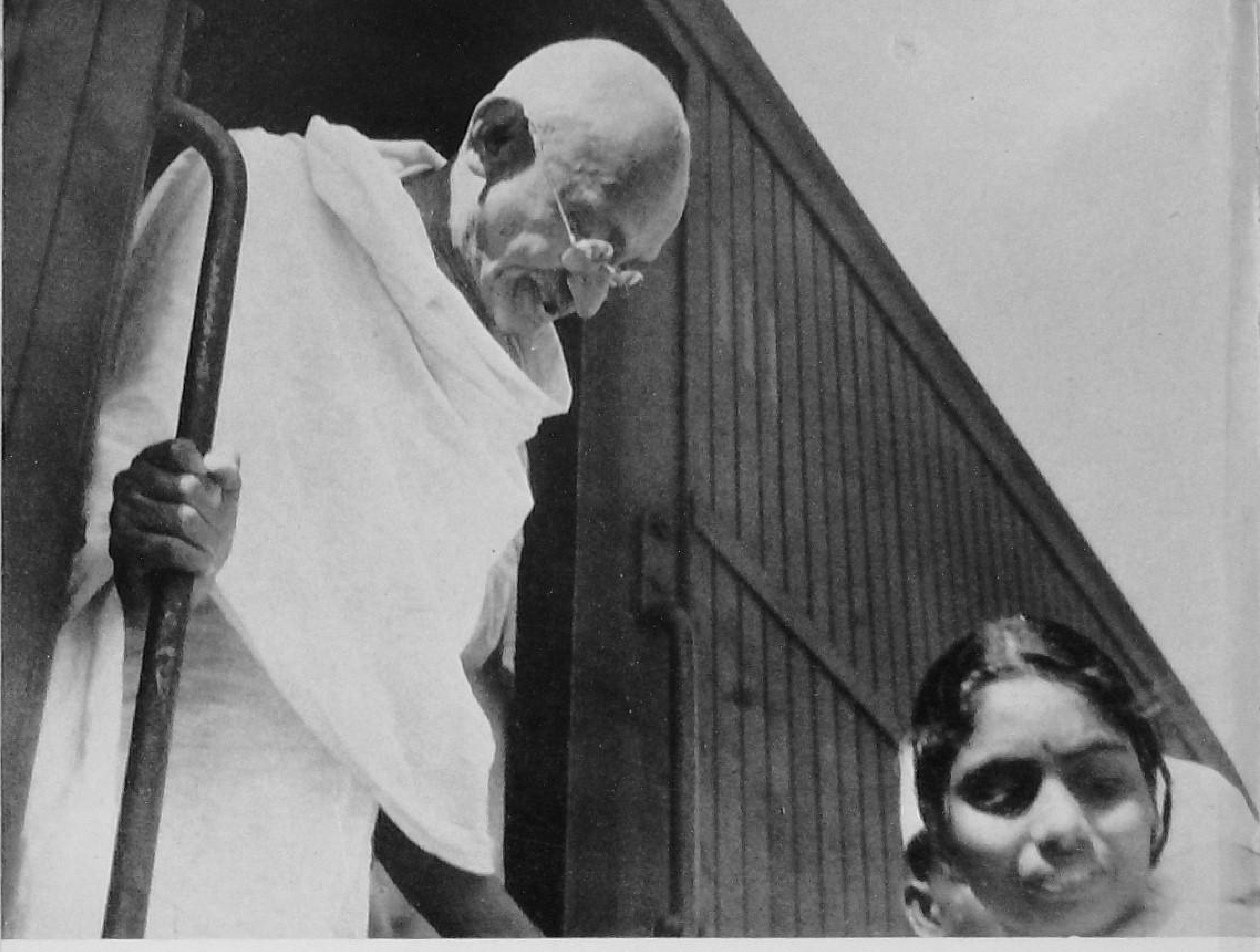
Gandhi addressing the people from the coach on the way to Madura, February 1946

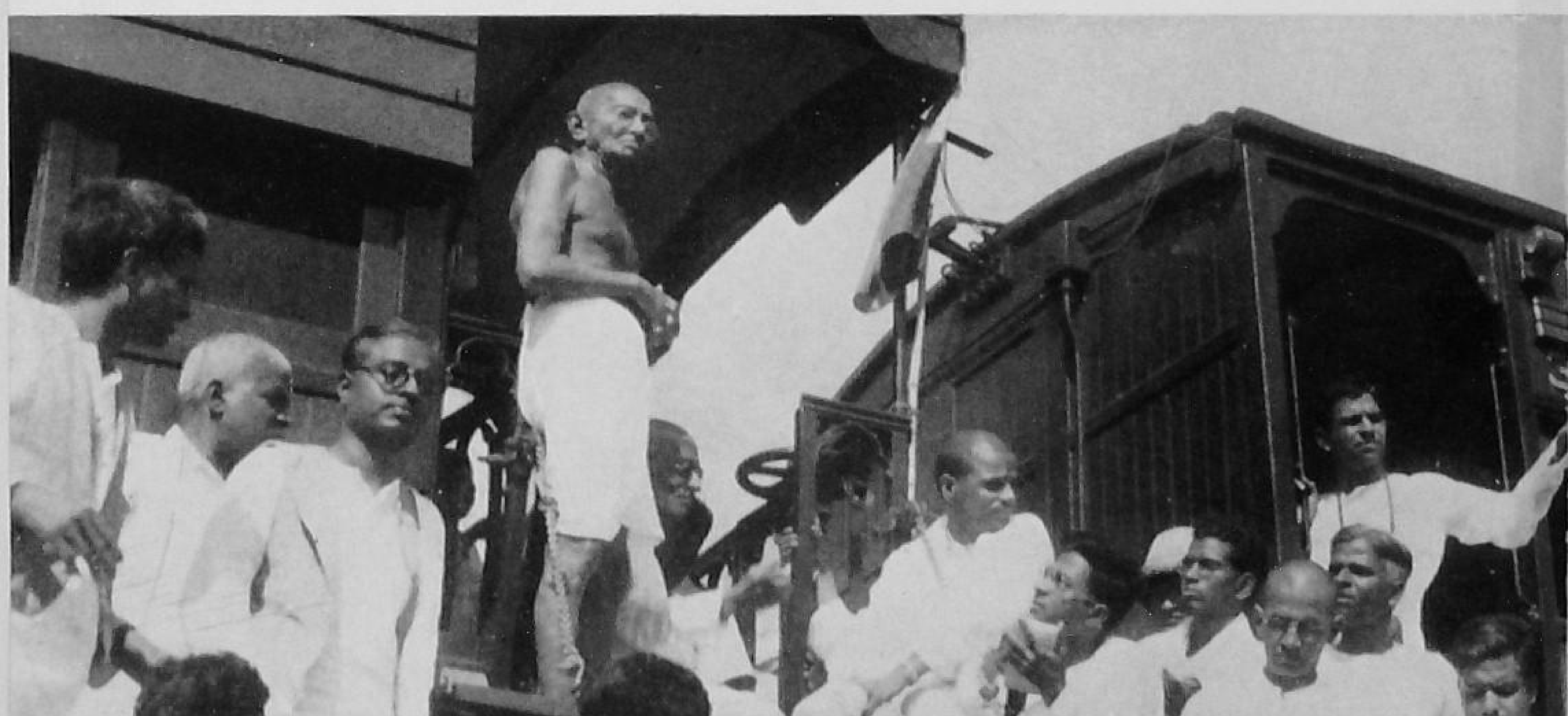


*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi's visit to the Meenakshi temple at Madura, February 3, 1946

At the end of the strenuous programme of the day at Madura





During the triumphal journey

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

in the South, February 1946

Courtesy : Chitrashala

Addressing the eager crowd on a railway platform at Bezwada, February 1946

this national process by a wise distribution of their cloth in cities and villages, while the transition process is going on. Argumentation on the capacity of mills to supply all the cloth required should cease in face of the calamity which is existent and daily growing in intensity. The mills cannot find employment for the millions of unemployed villagers. The educative value of the charkha is not to be surpassed. But for the spell of hypnotism, which rules our minds today, we shall all realize this obvious truth, set ourselves working out the concrete proposition, and thereby restore confidence to the millions and, may be, even to the world, which has neither enough food nor cloth."

After seeing Mr. Abell, Gandhi issued the following statement on February 12:

"The food situation brought the private secretary to the Viceroy to me. I had many meetings and appointments up to a fairly long time. These I could not disregard and I do not know how to fly and I hope that I may never have to do so. Therefore, in reply to an imperative invitation from His Excellency, I asked that he should send me someone who could speak for him, and so the private secretary came yesterday. Food situation alone brought him to me. Could I say something in order to lift the question out of the political arena and out of the general distrust of Government intentions and policy? As the matter brooks no delay, I give here the purport of what I said. So far as the Congress policy is concerned, His Excellency should invite the Maulana Saheb, and if he cannot come, ask him to name his deputy. I personally feel that the present irresponsible executive should be immediately replaced by a responsible one, chosen from the elected members of the Central Legislature. I also personally feel that this responsibility should be shouldered by the elected members of the Central Legislature, irrespective of parties, for, famine of cloth and food is common to the millions of India. Whether the Government can accept the suggestion and whether the different political parties that compose the Central Legislature consider it practical or not is more than I can say. But this much I can say without fear of contradiction. I have little doubt that if the mercantile community and the official world become honest, if only, in the face of impending calamity, we are such a vast country that we can just tide over the difficulty, even if no help comes from the outside world, which is itself groaning. Grain and cloth dealers

must not hoard, must not speculate. Food should be grown on all cultivable areas, wherever water is or is made available. The flower gardens should be used for growing food crops. This has been done during the period of war. The present is, in some respects, worse than the war period. Before we have eaten up the grain we have in stock, we must economize like the misers. All ceremonial functions should be stopped. Women can play the highest part in the alleviation of the present distress by economizing in their households. In nine-tenths of our activity, we can manage our daily affairs without the aid of the Government, whatever its colour may be, if only the Government will refrain from interfering with the people. Panic must be avoided at all costs. We must refuse to die before death actually takes toll and must think of the skeletons of India and the least little thing we may do to help, and all will be well with India. Let us not hypnotize ourselves into the belief that because we can indulge ourselves, our next-door neighbour can do likewise. Cloth famine, I know, is a mockery, for, if only the Government and millowners will act honestly and intelligently, no one need go naked for want of cloth. We have cotton enough and idle hands enough and skill enough to make in our villages all the cloth we need."

The food crisis, he said, should be regarded as a certainty. In the circumstances, the following things should be attended to at once:

"Every person should confine his daily wants regarding food to the minimum, consistent with his or her health requirements; and where, as in the cities, milk, vegetables, oil and fruit are available, grains and pulses should be reduced, as they easily can be. Starch can be derived from the starchy roots, such as the carrots, parsnips, potatoes, yam, bananas, the idea being to exclude from the present diet and conserve those grains and pulses which can be kept and stored. Vegetables too should not be eaten as an indulgence, or for pleasure, when the millions are denied the use of these things altogether and are now threatened with starvation due to the shortage of cereals and pulses.

"Everyone who has access to any water should try himself or herself to grow some edible for personal or for general use. The easiest way to do so is to collect clean earth, mix it with organic manure where possible—even a little bit of dried cow-dung is good organic manure—and put it in any earthen pot or tin pot and throw some seeds of vegetables, such as mustard and cress, etc., and daily water

the pots. They will be surprised how quickly these seeds sprout and give edible leaves, which need not be even cooked, but can be eaten in the form of salad.

"All flower gardens should be utilized for growing edibles. And in this connection, I would suggest to the Viceroy, Governors and high officials to take the lead. I would ask the heads of agricultural departments at the Centre and provinces to flood the country with leaflets in the provincial languages telling laymen, how and what to grow easily.

"The reduction should be taken up not merely by the civilian population, but equally, if not predominantly, by the military. I say predominantly, for the military ranks, being under rigid military discipline, can easily carry out measures of economy.

"All exports of seeds, such as oil-seeds, oils, oilcakes, nuts, etc., should be stopped, if they have not been already. Oilcakes, if the seeds are sifted of earth and foreign matter, are good human food with rich protein content.

"Deep wells should be sunk by the Government wherever possible and required, whether for irrigation or for drinking purposes.

"Given hearty co-operation by the Government servants and the general public, I have not the slightest doubt that the country can tide over the difficulty. Just as panic is the surest way to defeat, so also will be the case when there is widespread distress impending and prompt action is not taken. Let us not think of the causes of the distress. Whatever the cause, the fact is that if the Government and the public do not approach the crisis patiently and courageously, disaster is certainty. We must fight this foreign Government on all other fronts except this one, and even on this, we shall fight them, if they betray callousness or contempt for the reasoned public opinion. In this connection, I invite the public to share my opinion that we should accept Government professions at their face value and believe that swaraj is within sight inside of a few months.

"Above all, the black-marketing and dishonesty should disappear altogether and willing co-operation between all parties should be the order of the day, in so far as this crisis is concerned."

Gandhi did not allow the grass to grow under his feet. He took up the question with Dr. Zakir Husain and other members of the Talimi Sangh, who came to him for a discussion on February 16. Since Nayee Talim meant a living co-relationship with the actual

conditions of life, it ought to respond to every change. He stated: "It would not, therefore, do for you to say in the present crisis that you are occupied with your educational activity, whilst people are threatened with death due to starvation. Nayee Talim must react to the present situation by converting itself into an instrument for increasing our food supply and teaching the people how to meet the danger of food shortage. If the students under Nayee Talim can produce even a part of their food requirement, they will to that extent release food for others, besides teaching them self-help by their personal example."

Someone had complained that the land at the disposal of Talimi Sangh at Sevagram was of a poor quality and hardly fit for agriculture. Gandhi brushed aside the objection: "You do not know the kind of land we had to begin with in South Africa. But by dint of application we were able to convert it into a fruit orchard."

"If I were in your place," he said, "I would not use the plough to begin with. I would arm our children with the hoe and teach them to use it effectively. It is an art. The bullock power can come later. Similarly, I would not like you to be deterred by the poor quality of the soil. A thin top layer of loam or compost can enable us to grow many a useful vegetable and pot-herb. A beginning can be made at once by converting night-soil into manure by shallow trenching system. The conversion does not need more than a fortnight. Every pint of water, whether from bathing and ablutions, or from the kitchen, should be turned into the back-yard vegetable beds. Not a drop of water should be allowed to be wasted. Greens can be grown in earthen pots, and even in discarded old tins. No opportunity should be neglected, however trifling. The cumulative result, if the practice is on a nationwide scale, will be colossal."

Gandhi made the following practical suggestions to the Viceroy on February 21:

"The Indian army should be given this unique opportunity of doing constructive work. The army can be moved about easily. They could, therefore, be sent to all such places, where wells need to be dug most urgently.

"Regarding the additional foods, fish has been mentioned. Fish abounds in the seas around the coast of India. The war is over; there are innumerable small and medium-sized vessels, which were used for doing patrol and guard duties along our shores for the last

five years. The R. I. N. could arrange about staffing these, with the Department of Fisheries giving all assistance. If everything and anything can be done during a war, why not a peace-time war effort! The dry fish does even now form part of the normal diet of a great number of people, who are very poor, that is, when it is available and they can afford to buy it.

"All public gardens should immediately by law be made to start growing vegetables. The squads of army personnel should be put to work here too. The people requiring extra labour to transform their ground or garden should also be able to obtain free help through this channel.

"The distribution of food should be through co-operative societies or similar organizations.

"All food parcels to friends or to relatives in Britain or elsewhere abroad should be stopped, as also the export of groundnuts, oils, oilcakes, etc.

"All stocks of foodstuffs in the hands of the military should be released forthwith and no distinction should be made between the military and civil ranks."

Gandhi's reference to fish as a food shocked some of his admirers. "Does not this entail violence both for him who eats and him who provides the fish?"

Gandhi replied: "Both commit violence. And so do those who eat vegetables. This kind of violence is inherent in all embodied life, therefore, in man too. It is in this condition and in spite of it that we have to practise non-violence as a duty. I have often indicated how we may do so. The man who coerces another not to eat fish commits more violence than he who eats it. Fishermen, fish vendors and fish-eaters are probably unaware of any violence in their action. Even if they were, they might look upon it as unavoidable. But the man who uses coercion is guilty of deliberate violence. Coercion is inhuman. Those who quarrel among themselves, those who stoop to anything in order to amass wealth, those who exploit or indulge in forced human labour, those who overload or goad or otherwise torture animals, all these knowingly commit such violence as can easily be stopped. I do not consider it violence to permit the fish-eater to eat fish. It is my duty to suffer it. Ahimsa is the highest duty. Even if we cannot practise it in full, we must try to understand its spirit and refrain as far as is humanly possible from violence."

"It is necessary to import as many foodstuffs as possible," wrote a correspondent. "As it is, the people do not get enough to eat. Any further reduction in rations is fraught with risk."

Gandhi replied: "I am aware that many people hold the views given above. But this argument does not impress me. The people will find it unbearable to have their rations further reduced, when they are already not getting enough to eat. But if we accept, as I do, that the Government figures are correct, foresight demands, and it is our duty, to swallow the bitter pill and ask the people to do likewise, that is, we should all eat less, so that we can hold out till the next harvest. Today, because of the corrupt administration, the masses do not even get their just dues under the rationing system. It will be a great thing if this can be rectified, so that everyone can get his or her share easily and truly. If, however, we believe the Government figures to be wrong and continue the agitation for the increased rations and if the Government concedes that demand, a time will come, before the next harvest is in, when we shall be left without any food whatsoever, and the poor will have to die an untimely death. We should take every care to avoid such a calamity. It will, therefore, be wisdom on our part to put up with a reduction in the present rations.

"Then, I do not think it is impossible to grow more foodstuffs, though I agree that it is difficult. The difficulty is due to our lack of knowledge and the requisite skill. But if we are all optimistic and courageous, and employ ourselves forthwith to produce whatever food we can by our individual effort, we shall probably be able before long to give the people a balanced diet and shorten the period of reduced rations.

"My optimism is irrepressible, but I admit that nothing will be possible without whole-hearted co-operation on the part of both the Government and the public. Without it, even the imported foodstuffs may be squandered and maldistributed. And besides, we are not yet independent. Relying on the outside help will make us still more dependent. If, however, without relying on them, we do get imports of foodstuffs, we shall gratefully accept and make the best use of them. While it is the duty of the Government to try to get food from outside, I do not think it is good for us to look either to them or to the other countries. What is more, disappointment from that direction will be positively harmful for the morale of our people

in these hard times. But if the people become united and are determined to look to none save God for help and do not oppose such Governmental measures as they find useful, there will be no cause for disappointment. Such action will enable the people to emerge stronger from the ordeal and the foreign countries will think of their duty to send us food of their own accord, wherever they can spare it. God helps those who help themselves. How can others withhold help from the self-reliant? The British Government, during their hour of need, took away all that India had, and, today, we have to put up with the consequences of their action. Need we then tell them and those whom they helped by depleting India's resources that their duty today is towards India?"

The correspondents came out with several suggestions: "Flour-grinding machines are turned by engines in thousands of villages in Gujarat. By removing them to the source, these engines could be easily used for drawing water from the rivers, tanks and wells, for the purpose of irrigation. Could not the Government be induced or the owners be persuaded to divert the engines for this useful work in addition to working the grinders?"

Gandhi replied: "I regard the existence of power wheels for the grinding of corn in thousands of villages as the limit of our helplessness. I suppose India does not produce all the engines or grinding machines. I do fondly hope that the correspondent is incorrect and that the number of wheels and engines does not run into thousands even for the whole of India. But, if true, it is indicative of the utter laziness into which our people have fallen. The planting of such machinery and engines on a large scale in villages is also a sign of greed. Is it proper to fill one's pockets in this manner at the expense of the poor? Every such machinery puts thousands of hand *chakkis* out of work, and takes away employment from thousands of housewives and artisans who make these *chakkis*. Moreover, the process is infective and will spread to every village industry. The decay of the latter spells too the decay of art. If it meant the replacement of the old crafts by the new ones, one might not have much to say against it. But this is not what is happening. In the thousands of villages, where power machinery exists, one misses the sweet music in the early morning of the grinders at work.

"But to come to the main point. Whilst I hold that these power engines are at present being put to wrong use, it would be some

compensation if the engines, in addition to their present use, were also used to pump water out of the rivers, tanks and wells for irrigation. My correspondent suggests Government aid for this. Must this be necessary? Will not the owners of their own free will turn their engines towards this useful and necessary work? Or have we been reduced to such a paralytic state that without Government compulsion, we are unprepared to do anything? Be that as it may, it is my firm opinion that all necessary measures should be taken at once to utilize existing power in order to save the people from the terrible fate confronting them."

Some correspondents wrote to Gandhi on the scarcity of domestic servants. He replied:

"The institution of the domestic servants is an old one. But the attitude of master towards servant has changed from time to time. Some regard servants as members of the family, whereas others look upon them as slaves or chattels. Between these two extreme views may be summed up the attitude of society in general towards the servants. Nowadays, servants are in great demand everywhere. They have become conscious of their value and naturally demand their own conditions of pay and service. This would be proper, if it were invariably coupled with a proper understanding and performance of their duty. In that event, they would cease to be servants and would earn for themselves the status of members of the family. The belief in the efficacy of violence is, however, in the air. How then can servants properly win the status of members of their masters' families? That is a question that may well be asked.

"I hold that a man, who desires the co-operation of and wishes to co-operate with others, should not be dependent on servants. If anyone has to have one at a time of scarcity of servants, he will have to pay what is demanded, and accept all the other conditions with the result that he will, instead of being master, become the servant of his own employee. And this is good for neither the master nor the servant. But if what an individual seeks is not the slavery but the co-operation of a fellow being, he will not only serve himself but also him whose co-operation he needs. Through the extension of this principle, a man's family will become co-terminous with the world and his attitude towards his fellow beings will also undergo a corresponding change. There is no other way of reaching the desired consummation.

"He who wants to act on this principle will be content to start with small beginnings. In spite of a man's ability to command the co-operation of thousands, he must have sufficient self-restraint and self-respect in him to enable him to stand alone. Such a person will never dream of looking on any person as his menial and try to keep him under subjugation. In fact, he will forget altogether that he is the master of his servants and will try his best to bring them to his level. In other words, he should be content to do without what the others cannot have."

Gandhi took advantage of his twenty-four hours' stay in Bombay, on his way to Poona, by delivering his message to the people on two vital issues, namely, the discipline of prayer and the food crisis. The special feature of the prayer meeting, of February 18 was the mass singing of Ramdhun to the accompaniment of *tal* for the first time in Bombay, after the manner that had become familiar since his recent visit to Bengal, Assam and Madras. Some could not correctly time the accompaniment. It evoked from Gandhi a gentle rebuke. Bombay had the reputation of being musically minded, he stated. Gandhi had expected them to give a better account of themselves. Instead, he found confusion in the meeting and the beating of *tal* out of tune. "There is a time for laughing and shouting and a time for observing silence and being serious," he remarked chidingly. "I have often said that a people who want to be free should learn to mount to the gallows with a smile upon the face. But laughter becomes an offence against decorum, if it is out of season. Similarly, shouting out of season is an exhibition of bad manners. It becomes a man to remember his Maker all the twenty-four hours. If that cannot be done, we should at least congregate at prayer time to renew our covenant with God. Whether we are Hindus or Muslims, Parsis, Christians or Sikhs, we all worship the same God. The congregational prayer is a means for establishing the essential human unity through common worship. Mass singing of Ramdhun and the beating of *tal* are its outward expression. If they are not a mechanical performance, but are an echo of the inner unison, as they should be, they generate a power and an atmosphere of sweetness and fragrance which has only to be seen to be realized."

"In the police and the army," he continued, "physical drill and training in the use of the arms are regarded as an essential part of discipline. Military training includes marching in step and executing

of movements to order in the mass noiselessly and harmoniously too. The mass singing of Ramdhun and the accompaniment of *tal* are as much a part of discipline."

Turning next to the food crisis, he said that it presented a very grim prospect. They could criticize the Government as much as they liked for their share in it. He himself had not been sparing in his criticism of the Government in the past and he would do so again when the occasion demanded it, even though he stood alone. He stood by what he had said in 1942. If the British had stayed in India as the servants of the people, not as their masters, and purely to defeat the Axis powers, he would have had nothing to say. Instead, they had in their arrogance cast to the winds the warnings and protests of the people's representatives and denuded India of her vital resources, though perhaps not deliberately, with the result that they all knew.

Nevertheless, he could understand the shortage of food. But the shortage of cloth, he could not understand at all. India could grow any amount of cotton. "In this land of ours, fabulously rich in the natural resources," he said, "there is the lofty Himalayas, with its everlasting snows, where, they say, dwells the Lord of the Universe. It has mighty rivers like the Ganges. But owing to our neglect and our folly, the year's rains are allowed to run down into the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. If all this water was trapped and harnessed to the irrigational purposes by the construction of dams and tanks, there should be no famine or food shortage in India. Similarly, the cloth shortage can immediately be remedied by planting a miniature mill in every home in the form of a spinning wheel or a *takli*. That would give us all the cloth that we need almost for nothing. I have cried myself hoarse in pressing this solution on the Government. It is immediately feasible, and it is my claim that not a single person need go naked, if necessary steps are taken to put it into operation. The only obstacles in the way are the inertia and the prejudice in high places.

"In regard to the food shortage, I admit, that the Government alone has adequate resources to cope with it. But even so, we need not apathetically resign ourselves to fate, fixing our gaze at the skies for the rains to come. There is an inexhaustible reservoir of water in the bowels of the earth. It should be tapped, even though we may have to dig two thousand feet deep for it, and used for growing

food. We may not blame fate, before we have exhausted all available means for combating a threatening calamity.

"Today there is a lot of wastage in food going on in big cities like Bombay in the form of feasts and ceremonies. It is the sacred duty of every man, woman and child to conserve every grain of food and every drop of oil and ghee in the present crisis. One should eat no more than necessary to keep the body in health and fitness, when millions are faced with the prospect of death through starvation. The foodstuffs thus saved can be distributed among the needy poor, not as alms but as remuneration for honest labour."

Gandhi diagnosed the present helplessness of the country to the double slavery—slavery under the foreign yoke and slavery to our own inertia and sloth. The political slavery, they all hoped, and he shared that hope, would soon end. But the removal of the foreign yoke will not necessarily bring freedom to the people in the real sense of the term. The Congress President had only the other day denounced the recent happenings in Calcutta, as being unworthy of a people who aspired to be free. He hoped that they would never disgrace themselves again like that. People were greatly deceiving themselves, if they thought that by indulging in hooliganism they would be able to make the British quit India. They would belie their creed and demean themselves in the eyes of the world, if after pledging themselves to truth and non-violence as their only means for the attainment of swaraj, they exhibited their impotent wrath by indulging in looting, stone throwing, arson and abuse. He repeated what he had previously said that if forty crores of Indians resolved unanimously and whole-heartedly that they would have swaraj through truth and non-violence alone, it would be theirs for the asking. But if they lacked that faith, it was open to them to repudiate non-violence openly and after due deliberation. People like him might question their wisdom, but nobody would charge them with falsehood and cowardice.

Gandhi constantly said that he wanted to live up to 125 years:

"It has a very deep significance. The basis for my wish is the third mantra from *Ishopanishad* which, literally rendered, means that one should desire to live for 100 years while serving with detachment. One commentary says that 100 really means 125. Even today in Madras the word 'hundred' is used to mean 116. Hundred equal to ninety-nine plus one is not an invariable formula in our country.

"Be that as it may, the meaning of 'hundred' is not necessary for my argument. My sole purpose is to indicate the condition necessary for the realization of the desire. It is service in a spirit of detachment, which means complete independence of the fruit of action. Without it, one should not desire to live for 125 years. That is how I interpret the text. And I have not the slightest doubt that without attaining that state of detachment, it is impossible to live to be 125 years old. Living to that age must never mean a mere lifelike unto death, like that of an animated corpse, a burden on one's relations and on society. In such circumstances, one's supreme duty would be to pray to God for early release and not for the prolongation of life anyhow.

"Human body is meant solely for service, never for indulgence. The secret of happy life lies in renunciation. Renunciation is life. Indulgence spells death. Therefore, everyone has a right and should desire to live 125 years, while performing service without an eye on the result. Such life must be wholly and solely dedicated to service. Renunciation made for the sake of such service is an ineffable joy of which none can deprive one, because that nectar springs from within and sustains life. In this, there can be no room for worry or impatience. Without this joy, long life is impossible and would not be worth while, even if possible."

Gandhi reached Poona on February 19. On that day the Royal Indian Navy had presented their demands. For the next few days they took to arms, when they were shelled and fired upon. A week earlier, Gandhi prophetically wrote in *Harijan*:

"Hatred is in the air and the impatient lovers of the country will gladly take advantage of it, if they can, through violence, to further the cause of independence. I suggest that it is wrong at any time and everywhere. But it is more wrong and unbecoming in a country where the fighters for freedom have declared to the world that their policy is truth and non-violence. Hatred, cannot be turned into love, they argue. Those who believe in violence will naturally use it by saying, 'Kill your enemy, injure him and his property, wherever you can, whether openly or secretly, as necessity requires.' The result will be deeper hatred and counter hatred and vengeance let loose on both sides. The recent war, whose embers have yet hardly died, loudly proclaims bankruptcy of this use of hatred. And it remains to be seen, whether the so-called victors have really won or whether

they have not depressed themselves in seeking and trying to depress their enemies. This is a bad game at its best. Some philosophers of action in this country improve upon the model and say, 'We shall never kill our enemy, but we shall destroy his property.' Perhaps, I do them an injustice when I call it 'his property', for the remarkable thing is that the so-called enemy has brought no property of his own and what little he has brought, he makes us pay for. Therefore, what we destroy is really our own. The bulk of it, whether in men or things, he produces here. So what he really has is the custody of it. For the destruction too, we have to pay through the nose and it is the innocent who are made to pay. That is the implication of the punitive tax and all it carries with it. Non-violence in the sense of mere non-killing does not appear to me, therefore, to be any improvement on the technique of violence. It means slow torture, and when slowness becomes ineffective we shall immediately revert to killing and to the atom bomb, which is the last word in violence today. Therefore, I suggested in 1920 the use of non-violence and, its inevitable twin companion, truth, for canalizing hatred into the proper channel. The hater hates not for the sake of hatred, but because he wants to drive away from his country the hated being or beings. He will, therefore, as readily achieve his end by non-violent as by the violent means. For the past twenty-five years, willingly or unwillingly, the Congress has spoken to the masses in favour of non-violence, as against violence for regaining our lost liberty. We have also discovered through our progress that in the application of non-violence, we have been able to reach the mass mind far more quickly and far more extensively than ever before. And yet, if truth is told as it must be, our non-violent action has been half-hearted. Many have preached non-violence through the lips, while harbouring violence in the breast. But the unsophisticated mass mind has read the secret meaning hidden in our breasts, and the unconscious reaction has not been altogether as it might have been. Hypocrisy has acted as an ode to virtue, but it could never take its place. And so, I plead for non-violence and yet more non-violence. I do so, not without knowledge, but with sixty years of experience behind me. This is a critical moment, for the dumb masses are today starving. There are many ways that will suggest themselves to the wise reader as to how to apply the canons of non-violence to the present needs of the country. The hypnotism of the I. N. A. has cast its spell upon

us. Netaji's name is one to conjure with. His patriotism is second to none. (I use here the present tense intentionally.) His bravery shines through all his actions. He aimed high but failed. But who has not failed? Ours is to aim high and to aim well. It is not given to everyone to command success. My praise and my admiration can go no further. For I knew that his action was doomed to failure, and that I would have said so, even if he had brought his I. N. A. victorious to India, because the masses would not have come into their own in this manner. The lesson that Netaji and his army brings to us is one of self-sacrifice, unity—irrespective of class and community—and discipline. If our adoration will be wise and discriminating, we will rigidly copy this trinity of virtues, but we will as rigidly abjure all violence. I would not have the I. N. A. man think or say, that he and his can ever deliver the masses of India from bondage by the force of arms. But if he is true to Netaji, and still more so to the country, he will spend himself in teaching the masses, men, women and children, to be brave, self-sacrificing and united. Then we will be able to stand erect before the world. But, if he will merely act the armed soldier, he will only lord it over the masses and the fact that he will be a volunteer will not count for much. I, therefore, welcome the declaration made by Captain Shah Nawaz, that to be worthy of Netaji, on having come to Indian soil, he will act as a humble soldier of non-violence in Congress ranks."

The dissatisfaction in the Royal Indian Navy ranks took a grave turn on February 20 and the following day. The mutiny spread like wild fire and, in Bombay, Karachi and elsewhere, shots were exchanged. On February 22, he issued the following statement:

"I have followed the events now happening in India with painful interest. This mutiny in the navy and what is following is not, in any sense of the term, non-violent action. Inasmuch as a single person is compelled to shout 'Jai Hind' or any popular slogan, a nail is driven into the coffin of swaraj, in terms of the dumb millions of India. Destruction of the churches and the like is not the way to swaraj, as defined by the Congress. Burning of tramcars and other property, insulting and injuring the Europeans, is not non-violence of the Congress type, much less mine, if and in so far as it may be different from the Congress. Let the known and unknown leaders of this thoughtless orgy of violence know what they are doing and then follow their bent. Let it not be said that India of the Congress

spoke to the world of winning swaraj through non-violent action and belied her word in action and, that too, at the critical period in her life. I have deliberately used the adjective 'thoughtless'. For, there is such a thing as thoughtful violent action. What I see happening now is not thoughtful. If the Indian members of the navy know and appreciate non-violence, the way of non-violent resistance can be dignified, manly and wholly effective, if it is corporate. For the individual, it always is. Why should they continue to serve, if service is humiliating for them or for India? Action like this, I have called non-violent non-co-operation. As it is, they are setting a bad and unbecoming example for India.

"A combination between the Hindus and the Muslims and others for the purpose of violent action is unholy and it will lead to and probably is a preparation for mutual violence—bad for India and the world.

"The rulers have declared their intention to 'quit' in favour of Indian rule. Let the action be not delayed by a moment because of the exhibition of distressful unrest, which has been lying hidden in the breast. Their might is unquestioned. Its use beyond the bare requirement will be unworthy and even wicked, if it is made to suppress the people or a portion of them. The people have been far too long under the foreign heel."

Gandhi gave vent to his feelings again in an editorial in *Harijan* on February 24:

"See what is happening in Bombay—the Bombay where I have passed so much time, which has given the public causes so much money, and which I had thought had fairly imbibed something of ahimsa. Will it prove the burial ground of ahimsa?

"I am unable to think that the incendiarism, the looting and the insults heaped upon Englishmen are or were acts of hooligans. Who are hooligans? Will there be none, when the English rule is no more? The fashion of blaming the hooligan ought to be given up. We are the makers of the brand. They respond to the air about them.

"Imagine the senselessness of looting the grain shops. The looters did not help themselves. Even if they did, they were not starving. The grain was meant for the starving. If it was being misused, the looting could not prevent that misuse. Usurpers will always replace the looted grain, while there is any to usurp. Between the two sets of looters, the starving will be more starved than before.

"They who incited the mutineers did not know what they were doing. The latter were bound to submit ultimately. Or, was it meant as a lesson in violence? That is not the way to understand history.

"I ask myself, and, perhaps, others too are asking, why I am not repeating what I did after Chauri Chaura. I have no call in that direction. When or if it comes, nothing in the world will prevent me, ill or well. Let me reaffirm the truth that I love the Englishman as well as the Indian. Both are humans. Yet I want the rule of and for the masses of India. Lokamanya has taught us that Home Rule or swaraj is their birthright. That swaraj is not to be obtained by what is going on in Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi.

"Let every Congressman, whether a four-anna member or not, think for himself, where the Congress should stand. Let us not deceive ourselves and the world."

Socialists took a strong objection to Gandhi's statement. Aruna Asaf Ali said that the people were not interested in the ethics of violence or non-violence. Gandhi replied:

"Aruna would 'rather unite Hindus and Muslims at the barricade than on the constitution front'. Even in terms of violence, this is a misleading proposition. If the union at the barricade is honest, there must be union also at the constitutional front. Fighters do not always live at the barricade. They are too wise to commit suicide. The barricade life has always to be followed by the constitutional. That front is not taboo for ever.

"Emphatically it betrays want of foresight to disbelieve the British declarations and precipitate a quarrel in anticipation. Is the official deputation coming to deceive a great nation? It is neither manly nor womanly to think so. What would be lost by waiting? Let the official deputation prove for the last time that British declarations are unreliable. The nation will gain by trusting. The deceiver loses, when there is correct response from the deceived.

"Let us face the facts. The coming mission is claimed to be a friendly mission, entertaining the hope that they will discover a constitutional method of delivery. The problem is knotty, probably the knottiest that has ever confronted the statesmen. It is possible that the mission will put forth an insoluble conundrum. So much the worse for them. If they are intent upon finding an honest way out of the difficulties of their own creation, I have no doubt there is a way. But the nation too has to play the game. If it does, the barricade

must be left aside, at least for the time being. I appeal to Aruna and her friends to make wise use of the power, their bravery and sacrifice has given them.

"It is a matter of great relief that the ratings have listened to Sardar Patel's advice to surrender. But they have not surrendered their honour. So far as I can see, in resorting to mutiny, they were badly advised. If it was for grievance, fancied or real, they should have waited for the guidance and intervention of political leaders of their own choice. If they mutinied for the freedom of India, they were doubly wrong. They could not do so without a call from a prepared revolutionary party. They were thoughtless and ignorant, if they believed that by their might, they would deliver India from the foreign domination.

"Aruna is right, when she says that the fighters this time showed grit, as never before. But grit becomes foolhardiness, when it is untimely and suicidal, as this was.

"She is entitled to say that the people 'are not interested in the ethics of violence or non-violence', but the people are very much interested in knowing the way which will bring freedom to the masses, violence or non-violence. The people have, however imperfectly, hitherto gone the way of non-violence. Aruna and her comrades have to ask themselves every time whether the non-violent way has or has not raised India from her slumber of ages and has created in them a yearning, very vague perhaps, for swaraj. There is, in my opinion, only one answer."

Socialists frowned upon Gandhi's advice to the R.I.N. ratings to resign, if their condition was humiliating. "If they did what they would have to give up their only means of livelihood. Moreover, they were fighting for principles." Gandhi replied:

"The first principle of non-violent action as propounded in the Congress resolution of 1920, at its special session in Calcutta, is that of non-co-operation with everything humiliating. It must be remembered that the R.I.N. was founded not for the benefit of the ruled. The men went with their eyes open. Discrimination stares one in the face. It cannot be avoided, if one enters the service which is frankly organized to keep India under subjection. One may, one ought to, try to mend the conditions. That is possible only up to a point. That cannot be achieved through mutiny. Mutiny may conceivably succeed, but the success can only avail the mutineers and

their kin, not the whole of India. And the lesson would be a bad inheritance. Discipline will be at least as necessary under swaraj, as it is now. India under successful mutineers would be cut up into warring factions, exhausted by internecine strife.

"India of the Congress has made little headway in the appreciation of the fight for swaraj, if it is true that hundreds would take their places if the present ratings resigned in pursuance of their campaign against humiliation. Can we have swaraj for the masses, if we are so degraded that hundreds of us are ready to swallow humiliation even to the extent of taking the places of humiliated fellow men? The very thought is unworthy of Congressmen, and that too at the moment, when swaraj is believed to be within sight.

"Those who hold that the enlistment in the R.I.N. is their only means of livelihood must have a very poor opinion of them. The soldier's is a hard life. He is disciplined to work in co-operation and trained to work with the pickaxe and the spade. Such a one will disdain to think, that apart from soldiering, he has no means of livelihood. We have a poor opinion of soldiers, if we think that they cannot earn their bread by the sweat of the brow. A labourer is any day worthy of his hire. What is, however, true is that a soldier out of his calling will lack the glamour and the amenities provided for him. We have wasted precious twenty-five years, if we have not yet stripped the profession of killing and destroying of the thick coat of varnish that has covered it for so long.

"Aruna Asaf Ali has been reported to have said that the ratings would have gained nothing by resigning. Well, they would have gained honour and dignity, if they had manfully given up their job and taught the citizens of Bombay the way to save honour and dignity, and they would have spared Bombay the senseless destruction of life, property and very precious foodstuffs. Surely this would have been an achievement, not quite beneath notice."

"Congressmen going to the legislatures for conserving the honour and liberty of the country is not the same as the ratings serving for their livelihood, with the possibility of being used against their own countrymen and their liberty. Congressmen who go to the legislatures are representatives elected by their voters and they go even if it is only to prevent those from going who will misrepresent the voters. Going to the legislatures may be altogether bad, but there can be no such comparison, as has been just averted to."

Several army men had been to Gandhi's camp to seek advice. One of them was deeply agitated. The men were getting desperate, he said. "Would Gandhiji ask them to lie low and swallow all the humiliations and injustice?"

"No," replied Gandhi. "But, as you know, I stand for unadulterated non-violent action and open means. I abhor secrecy."

"What place could non-violence have in the fighting ranks as a means of redress?" the questioner asked.

Gandhi replied: "I laid down a programme of non-violent action in my 7th of August 1942 speech in the A.-I.C.C. for organizing the highest non-violence and self-sacrifice that the country was capable of. I told in that speech what the press should do, what the Government servants should do, and what the Indian soldiers should do. If all of them had done their part as suggested by me, it would have had a staggering effect. That programme can still be acted upon. Soldiers should declare that they will do soldiering, not for their bellies but to make India free and to keep her free. I do not want them to be disloyal to the Government in whose pay they are, for, if they are disloyal to the present Government today, by the same token, they may be disloyal to the national government tomorrow. But it is no disloyalty for a soldier to go and tell his superiors that he will be their man only, so long as they stand for his country's freedom, and that he would never bear arms to crush the liberty of his own people. If as a result of their declaration, they were disbanded or cashiered, or even court-martialled, they should not mind. Thereby, they would light a spark which not all armaments at the disposal of any power would be able to put out, and, before long, the entire Indian army would be filled with the spirit of patriotism, without having to shed blood. On the contrary, if the soldiers resorted to indiscipline and violence or rowdyism, they would alienate all sympathy and provide the authorities an excuse to teach them a lesson."

"You have condemned the hooliganism of the masses," wrote a correspondent, "but you have said nothing about the brutality of the military." To this, Gandhi replied:

"This is a specimen of thoughtlessness. The people have no right to commit excesses, whereas the military is the very embodiment of madness. Condemnation of military madness would be meaningless, when the very institution of the army is condemned. But criticism of

their conduct becomes necessary as a warning to the Government. There is time and occasion for everything. It would be out of place when condemning popular excesses.

"What is the duty of a satyagrahi general? Should he reform his own army or that of the opponent? If he reforms his own, power of the opposing force is sterilized. If the process continues over a sufficiently long period, the opponent is *ipso facto* completely transformed. The critic's remarks can only be meant for me. The others have already condemned military excesses. In my opinion, we have not as yet got sufficient material to judge them. I expect that this is being prepared. The duty of the people, however, is to turn the search-light inwards. Too much brooding over the wrongs of others is apt to lead one imperceptibly to act likewise. It would then be a case of the pot calling the kettle black."

"Look at Italy," remarked Gandhi to a friend, who would have independence at all costs. "Garibaldi was a great man. He brought deliverance to Italy. Mussolini did make her look great. But where is she today? Look at Japan, look at Germany. The very violence, which brought them to the pinnacle of power, has razed them to the ground. And has not the atom bomb proved the futility of all violence? And yet we are crazy enough to think that we can win swaraj by breaking a few skulls and by destroying property which, after all is said and done, is our own. I am sure, out of this orgy of violence, the people will learn the lesson of non-violence."

In reply to a correspondent who said that Gandhi should write a treatise on non-violence, he observed:

"To write such a treatise is beyond my powers. I am not built for academic writings. Action is my domain. What I understand, according to my lights, to be my duty, and what comes my way, I do. All my action is actuated by the spirit of service. Let any one who can systematize ahimsa into a science, do so—if, indeed, it lends itself to such treatment.

"From the above, it may be concluded that there is no need at present for the treatise in question. Any such, during my lifetime, would necessarily be incomplete. If at all, it could only be written after my death. And even so, let me give the warning that it would fail to give a complete exposition of ahimsa. No man has ever been able to describe God fully. The same holds true of ahimsa. I can give no guarantee that I will do or believe tomorrow, what I do or

hold to be true today. God alone is omniscient. Man in the flesh is essentially imperfect. He may be described as being made in the image of God, but is far from being God. God is invisible, beyond the reach of the human eye. All that we can do, therefore, is to try to understand the words and actions of those, whom we regard as men of God. Let them soak into our being and let us endeavour to translate them into action, but only so far as they appeal to the heart. Could any scientific treatise do more for us?"

## *Uruli Kanchan*

1946

In March 1946, Gandhi arrived in Bombay to attend a Working Committee meeting. His first utterance before the evening prayer gathering on the 13th referred to the R.I.N. disturbances:

"The news of recent events in Bombay has filled me with shame and humiliation, as it must have you too. Let me hope that none of those who are here took part in these disgraceful happenings. But that alone would not entitle you to my congratulations. We have reached a stage, when nobody can afford to sit on the fence or can take refuge in the 'ambiguous middle'. One has to speak out and stand up for one's convictions. Inaction at a time of conflagration is inexcusable. Is it too difficult an ideal to follow? Let me tell you, however, that this is the only course that will take us safely through the present difficult times.

"It has become the fashion these days to ascribe such ugly manifestations to the activities of hooligans. It hardly becomes us to take refuge in that moral alibi. Who are the hooligans after all? They are our countrymen, and so long as any countryman of ours indulges in such acts, we cannot disown responsibility for them consistently with our claim that we are one people. It matters little, whether those who were responsible for the happenings are denounced as goondas or praised as patriots—praise and blame must equally belong to us all. The only manly and becoming course for those who are aspiring to be free is to accept either, whilst doing our duty.

"In eating, in sleeping and in the performance of other physical functions, man is not different from the brute. What distinguishes him from the brute is his ceaseless striving to rise above the brute on the moral plane. Mankind is at the cross-roads. It has to make its choice between the law of the jungle and the law of humanity. We in India deliberately adopted the latter twenty-five years back, but, I am afraid, that whilst we profess to follow the higher way,

our practice has not always conformed to our profession. We have always proclaimed from the house-tops that non-violence is the way of the brave, but there are some amongst us who have brought non-violence into disrepute, by using it as a weapon of the weak. In my opinion, to remain a passive spectator of the kind of crimes that Bombay has witnessed of late is cowardice. Let me say in all humility that ahimsa belongs to the brave. Pritam has sung: 'The way of the Lord is for the brave, not for the coward.' By the way of the Lord is here meant the way of non-violence and truth. I have said before that I do not envisage God other than truth and non-violence. If you have accepted the doctrine of ahimsa without a full realization of its implications, you are at liberty to repudiate it. I believe in confessing one's mistakes and correcting them. Such confession strengthens one and purifies the soul. Ahimsa calls for the strength and courage to suffer without retaliation, to receive blows without returning any. However, that does not exhaust its meaning. Silence becomes cowardice, when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly. We have to cultivate that courage, if we are to win India's independence through truth and non-violence as proclaimed by the Congress. It is an ideal worth living for and dying for. Every one of you who has accepted that ideal should feel that inasmuch as a single English woman or child is assaulted, it is a challenge to your creed of non-violence and you should protect the threatened victim, even at the cost of your life. Then alone, you will have the right to sing: 'The way of the Lord is for the brave, not for the coward.' To attack defenceless English women and children, because one has a grievance against the present Government hardly becomes a human being.

"British Cabinet ministers' delegation will soon be in our midst. To suspect their bona fides in advance would also be a variety of weakness. As brave people, it is our duty to take at its face value the declaration of British ministers that they are coming to restore to India what is her due. If a debtor came to your house in contrition to repay his debt, would it not be your duty to welcome him? On the other hand, would it not be unmanly to treat him with insult and humiliation in remembrance of the past injustice? Let the British prove for the final time that they do not mean to act according to their professions. It will be time to act, if they do so. Till then, the only manly course is to maintain dignified silence."

Some I.N.A. officers told him that their colleagues were anxious to do national service along non-violent lines, but unless they were suitably absorbed in civil activities and properly guided, they might be led into the wrong channels by unscrupulous agencies. What ideal then they should follow, the I.N.A. officers asked. The ideal which they should set before themselves was to earn their bread by honest industry, Gandhi replied. The I.N.A. Relief Fund was there, but it would be wrong to use it for providing doles. He described to them how in South Africa he had provided relief to the dependants of the satyagraha prisoners by settling them on Tolstoy Farm, where they had to labour according to capacity. The merit of this method was that it could be multiplied to any degree, without proving costly and burdensome. The real test of the I.N.A. was to come only now. In the fighting line, there was the romance and incitement, not so in civil life. The country was today faced with a spectre of famine. Would the I.N.A. help the people to fight it with the same courage, cohesion, doggedness and resourcefulness which they had shown on the battlefield? Would they show the same diligence, mastery and skill in handling the spade, the pickaxe and the hoe, as they did in shouldering the rifle? Digging of wells and breaking stony ground to grow food and, plying the wheel and the shuttle to clothe the naked was the nation's need today. Would they respond to the call? They had physical stamina, discipline and, what was more, a feeling of solidarity and oneness, untainted by narrow communalism. All that ought to put them in a singular position of vantage for introducing non-violent discipline and organization among the masses.

At the mammoth gathering of over two lakhs in Shivaji Park, on March 14, Gandhi delivered a speech on satyagraha, as the art of living, and its relation to prayer:

"The singing of Ramdhun is the most important part of the congregational prayer. The millions may find it difficult to correctly recite and understand the Gita verses and the Arabic and the Zend-Avesta prayers, but everybody can join in chanting Ramanam or God's name. It is as simple, as it is effective. Only it must proceed from the heart. In its simplicity lies its greatness, and the secret of its universality. Anything that the millions can do together becomes charged with a unique power.

"I congratulate you on your success in the mass singing of Ramdhun without any previous training. But this is capable of further

improvement. You should practice it in your own homes. I am here to testify that when it is sung in tune to the accompaniment of *tal*, the triple accord of the voice, accompaniment and thought creates an atmosphere of ineffable sweetness and strength which no words can describe.

"I introduced the practice of having congregational prayer some time before the commencement of the South African satyagraha struggle. The Indian community there was faced with a grave peril. We did all that was humanly possible. All methods of seeking the redress—agitation through the press and the platform, petitions and deputations—were tried, but proved of no avail. What was Indian community, consisting of a mere handful of illiterate indentured labourers mostly, with a sprinkling of free merchants, hawkers, etc., to do in the midst of an overwhelming majority of the Negroes and the Whites? The Whites were fully armed. It was quite clear that, if the Indians were to come into their own, they must forge a weapon, which would be different from and infinitely superior to the force, which the white settlers commanded in such ample measure. It was then that I introduced the congregational prayer in Phoenix and in Tolstoy Farm, as a means for a training in the use of the weapon of satyagraha or soul force.

"The root of satyagraha is in prayer. A satyagrahi relies upon God for protection against the tyranny of brute force. Why should you then be always afraid of the British or anybody else playing you false? If someone deceives you, he will be the loser. The fight of satyagraha is for the strong in spirit, not the doubter or the timid. Satyagraha teaches us the art of living, as well as, dying. Birth and death are inevitable among the mortals. What distinguishes the man from the brute is his conscious striving to realize the spirit within. The last eighteen verses of the second chapter of the Gita, which are recited at the prayer, give in a nutshell the secret of the art of living. It is given there in the form of a description of a *sthitaprajna* or the man of steady wisdom, that is, a satyagrahi, in reply to Arjuna's query to Lord Krishna.

"The art of dying follows as a corollary from the art of living. Death must come to all. A man may die of a lightning stroke, or as a result of heart failure, or the failure of respiration. But that is not the death that a satyagrahi can wish for or pray for himself. The art of dying for a satyagrahi consists in facing death cheerfully in the

performance of one's own duty. That is an art which the people of Bombay, apparently, have not yet learnt. It is not enough not to want to hurt or take the life of your enemy. You are no satyagrahis if you remain silent or passive spectators, while your enemy is being done to death. You must protect him, even at the cost of your life. If thousands in India learnt that art, the face of India would be changed and no one would be able to point his finger of scorn at her non-violence, as being a cloak for weakness. We would not then try to shift blame for ugly happenings on the hooligan elements. We would convert and control the hooligan elements too.

"We are now passing through a crisis in our history. Danger besets us on all sides. But we shall convert it into our opportunity, if we realize the power of satyagraha, than which there is nothing more potent on earth."

The Working Committee met on March 15 and passed four resolutions on critical food situation, on recent disturbances in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and other places, on South Africa and on the international situation. The resolutions strictly followed the lead given by Gandhi in his writings in *Harijan*. The same passion for essentials was reflected in Gandhi's insistence on drafting the resolutions for the Working Committee in Hindustani, an English translation being provided alongside for the convenience of those members who did not know Hindustani well enough.

Gandhi followed up the subject of South Africa in an editorial in *Harijan*. He wrote:

"The course of events has raised the question of South African white man's policy to the highest level. Unseen, it holds the seeds of a world war. The threatened Land and Franchise Bill which has brought the South African Indian delegation to India, though it superficially affects the Indians of Natal and Transvaal, is in effect a challenge to Asia and by implication to the Negro races. India in her present exalted mood, can view it in no other way. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is Indian to the core but, he being also an internationalist, has made us accustomed to looking at everything in the international light, instead of the parochial. India, weak physically and materially but strong ethically and numerically, has proclaimed from the house-tops that her independence would be a threat to no one and no nation, but it will be a help to noble effort throughout the world and a promise of relief to all its exploited peoples.

Therefore, India regards the contemplated measure of the Union of South Africa as an insult and challenge to them.

"The Indian deputation see in the present measure not merely an assault on the Indian property rights, but also on their status as free men. They do not want merely to exist in South Africa. They need not have sent the deputation all the way to India for that purpose. They want to be in South Africa as equals of the European settlers of South Africa. They know that today they are not. But they must stop the deterioration and hence move forward. In that forward march, India will help them, of course. Indeed, all the moral forces will be at their call. The brunt, however, will have to be borne by them. They rediscovered the force of truth (satyagraha) and that will be their only and ultimate source of power. Time for it is not yet. Let us hope, it will never come. They have to try to gather together on their side all the moral forces of the world. They will have to clear the ground of all the weeds, all sordidness, all personal ambition, which always and everywhere creeps in, if a sleepless vigilance is not kept on the watch-tower. Imagine the plight of a poor barque sailing, when the beacon light in front has gone out.

"They must be prepared for accidents and consequent suffering. If they are in earnest and hardy enough to brave the worst, they are bound to come out the best in the end.

"What about the whites of South Africa? They invited the Indians in the first instance. If they had thought that the invitees would be always like slaves, or that they would not be followed by their free brethren, they (the whites) were soon undeceived.

"Does the real superiority require the outside props in the shape of legislation? Will they not see that every such wall of protection weakens them, ultimately rendering them effeminate? The lesson of history ought to teach them, that might is not right. Right only is might. Field-Marshal Smuts is a great soldier-statesman. Will he not perceive that he will be taking the whitemen of South Africa down the precipice, if he persists in the policy underlying his measure? Let him take counsel with the allies to whose victory on the battlefield he contributed not a little. He will surely throw away its fruits if he persists in his plan of protecting the civilization of the West by artificial means."

The bulk of his time during his five days' stay in Bombay was taken up with the work in connection with the Working Committee

meetings. But he found time to introduce to the people of Bombay his latest born scheme, a nature cure for the poor.

"It is not claimed," Gandhi explained, "that nature cure can cure all diseases. No system of medicine can do that, or else we should all be immortals. But it enables one to face and bear down with unperturbed equanimity and peace of mind an illness which it cannot cure. If once we decide that what cannot be shared by the millions should be taboo for us, we are driven to nature as the only cure—all for the rich and the poor alike."

In the armoury of the nature curist, Ramanam is the most potent weapon. "Let no one wonder at it," he remarked. "A noted Ayurvedic physician told me the other day: 'All my life I have been administering drugs. But since you have prescribed Ramanam as a cure for the physical ailments, it has occurred to me that what you say has too the authority of Vaghabhat and Charak.' The recitation of Ramanam as a remedy for spiritual ailments is as old as the hills. But the greater includes the less. And my claim is that the recitation of Ramanam is a sovereign remedy for our physical ailments also. A nature cure man will not tell the patient, 'Invite me and I shall cure you of your ailment.' He will only tell about the all-healing principle that is in every being and how one can cure oneself by evoking it and making it an active force in his life. If India could realize the power of that principle, not only would we be free, but we would be a land of healthy individuals too—not the land of epidemics and ill health that we are today."

"The potency of Ramanam is, however, subject to certain conditions and limitations," he proceeded. "Ramanam is not like the black magic. If some one suffers from surfeit and wants to be cured of its after-effects, so that he can again indulge himself at the table, Ramanam is not for him. Ramanam can be used only for a good, never for an evil end, or else the thieves and robbers would be the greatest devotees. Ramanam is for the pure in heart and for those who want to attain purity and remain pure. It can never be a means for self-indulgence. The remedy for surfeit is fasting, and not prayer. Prayer can come in only, when fasting has done its work. It can make fasting easy and bearable. Similarly, the taking of Ramanam will be a meaningless farce, when, at the same time, you are drugging your system with medicines. A doctor who uses his talent to pander to the vices of his patient degrades himself and his patient.

What worse degradation can there be for man than that instead of regarding his body as an instrument of worshipping his Maker, he should make it the object of adoration and waste money like water to keep it going anyhow. Ramanam, on the other hand, purifies while it cures, and, therefore, it elevates. Therein lies its use as well as its limitation."

Gandhi had made up his mind to shift his nature cure activities from Poona to some suitablé village. On March 17, *Harijan* came out with "My Confession and Cure":

"It is plain to me, as it has become to some of my friends, that I am incorrigible. I can learn only by my mistakes. I have just discovered myself making a mistake which I should never have made.

"I have known Dr. Dinshah Mehta for a long time. He has dedicated his life solely to nature cure of his own conception. His one ambition is to see a full-fledged nature cure university established in India. A university worth the name must be predominantly for the prevention and cure of the diseases of poor villagers of India. No such university exists in the world. The institutes in the West are designed more for the rich than the poor.

"I feel that I know the method of nature cure for the villagers of India. Therefore, I should at once have known that nature cure for villagers could not be attempted in the city of Poona. But a trust was made. Very sober Jehangirji Patel permitted himself to be a co-trustee with Dr. Dinshah Mehta and me, and I hastened to Poona to run for the poor Dr. Mehta's erstwhile clinic which was designed for the rich. I suggested some drastic changes, but, last Monday, the knowledge dawned upon me that I was a fool to think that I could ever hope to make an institute for the poor in a town. I realized that if I cared for the ailing poor, I must go to them and not expect them to come to me. This is true of ordinary medicinal treatment. And it is much more so of nature cure. How is a villager coming to Poona to understand and carry out my instructions to apply mud poultices, take sun cure, hip and friction sitz-baths, or certain foods cooked conservatively? He would expect me to give him a powder or a potion to swallow and be done with it. Nature cure connotes a way of life which has to be learnt; it is not a drug cure as we understand it. The treatment to be efficacious can, therefore, only take place in or near a man's cottage, or house. It demands from its physician sympathy and patience and knowledge of the human

nature. When he has successfully practised in this manner in a village or villages, when enough men and women have understood the secret of nature cure, a nucleus for the nature cure university is founded. It should not have required eleven days' special stay in the nature cure institute to discover this simple truth that I did not need a huge building and all its attendant paraphernalia for my purpose. I do not know whether to laugh or weep over my folly. I laughed at it and made haste to undo the blunder. This confession completes the reparation.

"I should like the reader to draw the moral that he should never take anything for gospel truth even if it comes from a 'Mahatma', unless it appeals to both his head and heart. In the present case, my folly is so patent that, even if it had continued for some time, very few, if any, would have succumbed to it. The real villagers would not have come for relief to this institute. But if the discovery had come too late, it would have blasted my reputation, for I would have lost in my own estimation. Nothing hurts a man more, than the loss of self-respect. I do not know that I now deserve the confidence of my fellow men. If I lose it, I know I shall have deserved the loss. But to complete the story, I must tell the reader that not a pice of the money, earmarked for the poor ailing villagers, has been spent on this abortive enterprise. What shape the present institute will now take and where and how poor men's nature cure will be tried is no part of this confession. The result of the initial mistake must not, however, be an abandonment of the new pursuit that I have taken up in the so-called evening of my life. It must, on the contrary, be a clearer and more vigorous pursuit of the ideal of nature cure for the millions, if such a thing is at all practicable. Possible it certainly is."

Gandhi did not stay for many days in the Nature Cure Clinic at Poona. Uruli Kanchan into which he moved on March 22 was a small station on the Sholapur-Poona line with a population of about 3,000. The climate was good, the air bracing. There was a plentiful supply of filtered water from the military camp waterworks near by. The locality grew many fruits like grape, orange and *papaiya* in profusion.

A few days earlier, a deputation of the leading men of Uruli had waited on Gandhi at Poona, to request him to establish his proposed nature cure centre there. They promised to provide enough land

for the purpose and their co-operation, besides donating Rs. 10,000 to the Nature Cure Trust for the experiment at Uruli.

A prayer meeting was held on the very first day at the outskirt of the village of Uruli. Taking as his text the hymn that had been sung, Gandhi presented Ramanam to the village folk as a natural therapeutic number one for the cure of the bodily ailments: "In the song that we have just sung, the devotee says, 'Oh Hari, You are the reliever of the people's distress.' The promise here is universal. It is not qualified or restricted to any particular kind of ailment." He told them of the conditions of success. The efficacy of Ramanam would depend on whether it was or was not backed by a living faith: "If you are subject to anger and eat and sleep for indulgence, not solely for sustenance, you do not know the meaning of Ramanam. Your recitation of it is mere lip service. Ramanam to be efficacious must absorb your entire being during its recitation and express itself in your whole life."

Patients began to pour in from the next morning. There were about thirty of them. Gandhi examined five or six of them and then prescribed to them all, more or less, the same treatment with slight variations, according to the nature of each case, the recitation of Ramanam, sun bath, friction and hip baths, a simple eliminative diet of milk, buttermilk, fruit and fruit juices with plenty of clean fresh water to drink. "It has truly been observed," he explained at the prayer meeting, "that all mental and physical ailments are due to one common cause. It is, therefore, but natural that there should be a common remedy for them too. There is a unity to cure, as there is in disease. The shastras say so. Therefore, I have prescribed Ramanam and almost the same treatment to all the patients, who came to me this morning. But we have a knack of explaining away the shastras in life, when they do not suit our convenience. We have deluded ourselves into the belief that the shastras are meant only for the benefit of the soul in the life to come, that the end of *dharma* is to acquire merit after death. I don't share that view. If *dharma* has no practical use in this life, it has none for me in the next.

"There is hardly anybody in this world who is completely free from ailment, whether bodily or mental. For some of these, there is no earthly cure. For instance, Ramanam can never perform the miracle of restoring to you a lost limb. But it can perform the still greater miracle of helping you to enjoy an ineffable peace, in spite

of the loss while you live, and rob death of its sting and the grave its victory at the journey's end. Since death must come soon or late to everyone, why should one worry over the time."

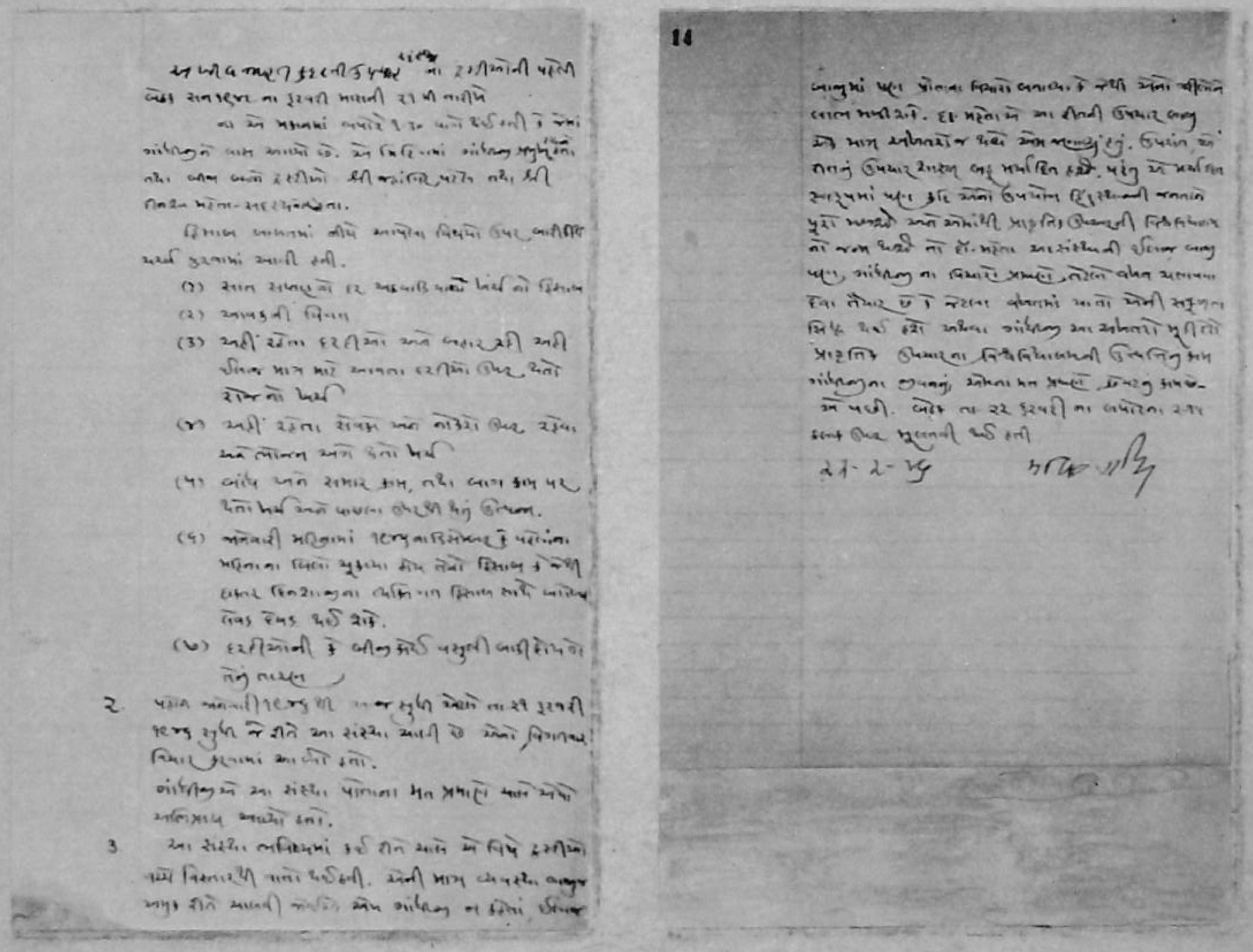
The number of patients increased from thirty to forty-three on the third day. "This is good," remarked Gandhi, "because it shows that those who need the nature cure treatment are coming forward to avail themselves of it." If the work proceeded according to plan, he intended to stay for at least four months in the year in their midst. During his absence, his colleagues would continue to direct and to guide them according to his instructions. "The practice of nature cures," he stated, "does not require high academic qualifications or much erudition. Simplicity is the essence of universality. Nothing that is meant for the benefit of the millions requires much erudition. The latter can be acquired by the few and, therefore, can benefit the rich only. But India lives in her seven lakhs of villages, obscure, tiny, out-of-the-way villages, where the population in some cases hardly exceeds a few hundred, and very often not even a few score. I would like to go and settle down in some such village. That is real India, my India, for which I live. You cannot take to these humble people the paraphernalia of the highly qualified doctors and hospital equipment. In simple natural remedies and Ramanam lies their only hope."

He had been informed that there was hardly any disease in Uruli. Probably, what was meant was that no epidemic was prevalent, that being the popular conception of disease. But from the cases that had come to him during the last two days, it was clear that ill health there was in plenty in Uruli. "If you do as I ask you to," he observed, "Uruli will become an ideal village, to see which, people will come from far."

He then proceeded to give them his first discourse on the nature cure principles:

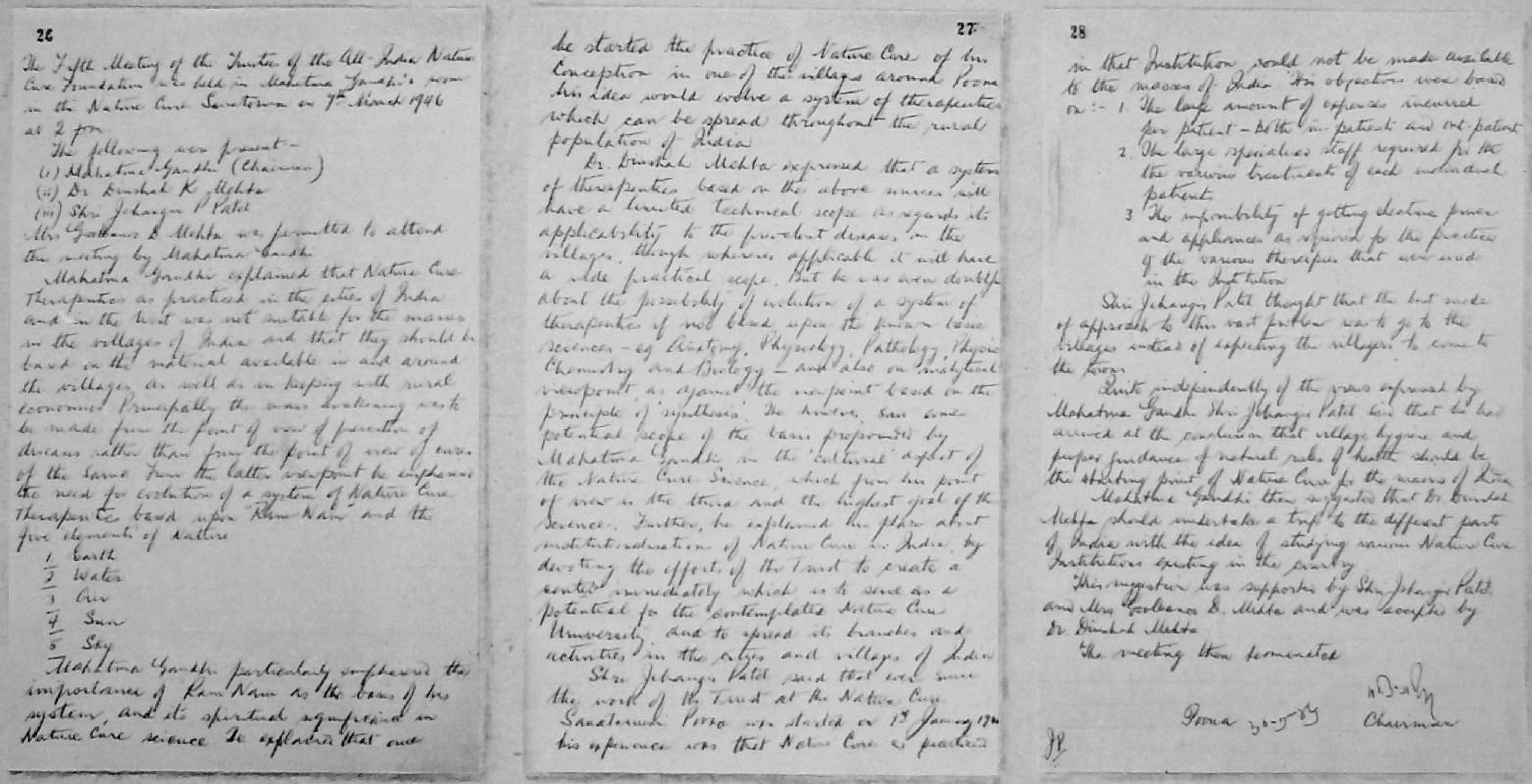
"Man's physical body is composed of five natural elements—air, water, earth, fire or *tejas* (the energizing principle) and ether (space). The soul quickens it.

"The most essential of all these is air. Man can live without food for several weeks, without water for some time, but without air, he cannot live for more than a few minutes. God has, therefore, made air universally available. The shortages of food or of water, there may be at times, but of air never. In spite of it, we foolishly deprive



*Courtesy : All-India Nature Cure Trust, Uruli*

Minutes of the first meeting of the trustees of the All-India Nature Cure Federation held under the chairmanship of Gandhi at Poona on February 21, 1946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The Fifth Meeting of the Trustees of the All-India Nature Cure Foundation was held in Mahatma Gandhi's room in the Nature Cure Sanatorium on 7th March 1946 at 2 pm.

The following were present –
(i) Mahatma Gandhi (Chairman)
(ii) Dr Dinshah K. Mehta
(iii) Shri Jehangir P Patel

Mrs Goolbanoo D Mehta was permitted to attend the meeting by Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi explained that Nature Cure Therapeutics as practised in the cities of India and in the West was not suitable for the masses in the villages of India and that they should be based on the material available in and around the villages as well as in keeping with rural economics. Principally the main [illegible] work be made from the point of view of prevention of diseases rather than from the point of view of cures of the same. From the latter viewpoint he emphasised the need for evolution of a system of Nature Cure therapeutics based upon "Ram Nam" and the five elements of nature

1 Earth
2 Water
3 Air
4 Sun
5 Sky

Mahatma Gandhi particularly emphasised the importance of Ram Nam as the basis of his system, and its spiritual significance in Nature Cure science. He explained that once

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he started the practice of Nature Cure of his conception in one of the villages around Poona his idea would evolve a system of therapeutics which can be spread throughout the rural population of India.

Dr. Dinshah Mehta expressed that a system of therapeutics based on the above sources will have a limited technical scope as regards its applicability to the prevalent diseases in the villages, though wherever applicable it will have a wide practical scope. But he was even doubtful about the possibility of evolution of a system of therapeutics if not based upon the known basic sciences – eg Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, Physio-Chemistry and Biology – and also on analytical viewpoint as against the viewpoint based on the principle of 'synthesis'. He however saw some potential scope of the basis propounded by Mahatma Gandhi in the 'cultural' aspect of the Nature Cure Science, which from his point of view is the third and the highest goal of the Science. Further, he explained the plan about institutionalisation of Nature Cure in India by devoting the efforts of the Trust to create a centre immediately which is to serve as a potential for the contemplated Nature Cure University and to spread its branches and activities in the cities and villages of India.

Shri Jehangir Patel said that ever since the work of the Trust at the Nature Cure Sanatorium Poona was started on 1st January 1946 his experience was that Nature Cure as practised

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in that Institution could not be made available to the masses of India. His objections were based on:–
1. The large amount of expenses incurred per patient – both in-patient and out-patient
2. The large specialised staff required for the various treatments of each individual patient
3. The impossibility of getting electric power and appliances as required for the practice of the various therapies that were used in the Institution

Shri Jehangir Patel thought that the best mode of approach to this vast problem was to go to the villages instead of expecting the villagers to come to the town.

Quite independently of the views expressed by Mahatma Gandhi Shri Jehangir Patel said that he had arrived at the conclusion that village hygiene and proper guidance of natural rules of health should be the starting point of Nature Cure for the masses of India.

Mahatma Gandhi then suggested that Dr Dinshah Mehta should undertake a trip to the different parts of India with the idea of studying various Nature Cure Institutions existing in the country.

This suggestion was supported by Shri Jehangir Patel and Mrs Goolbanoo D. Mehta and was accepted by Dr Dinshah Mehta.

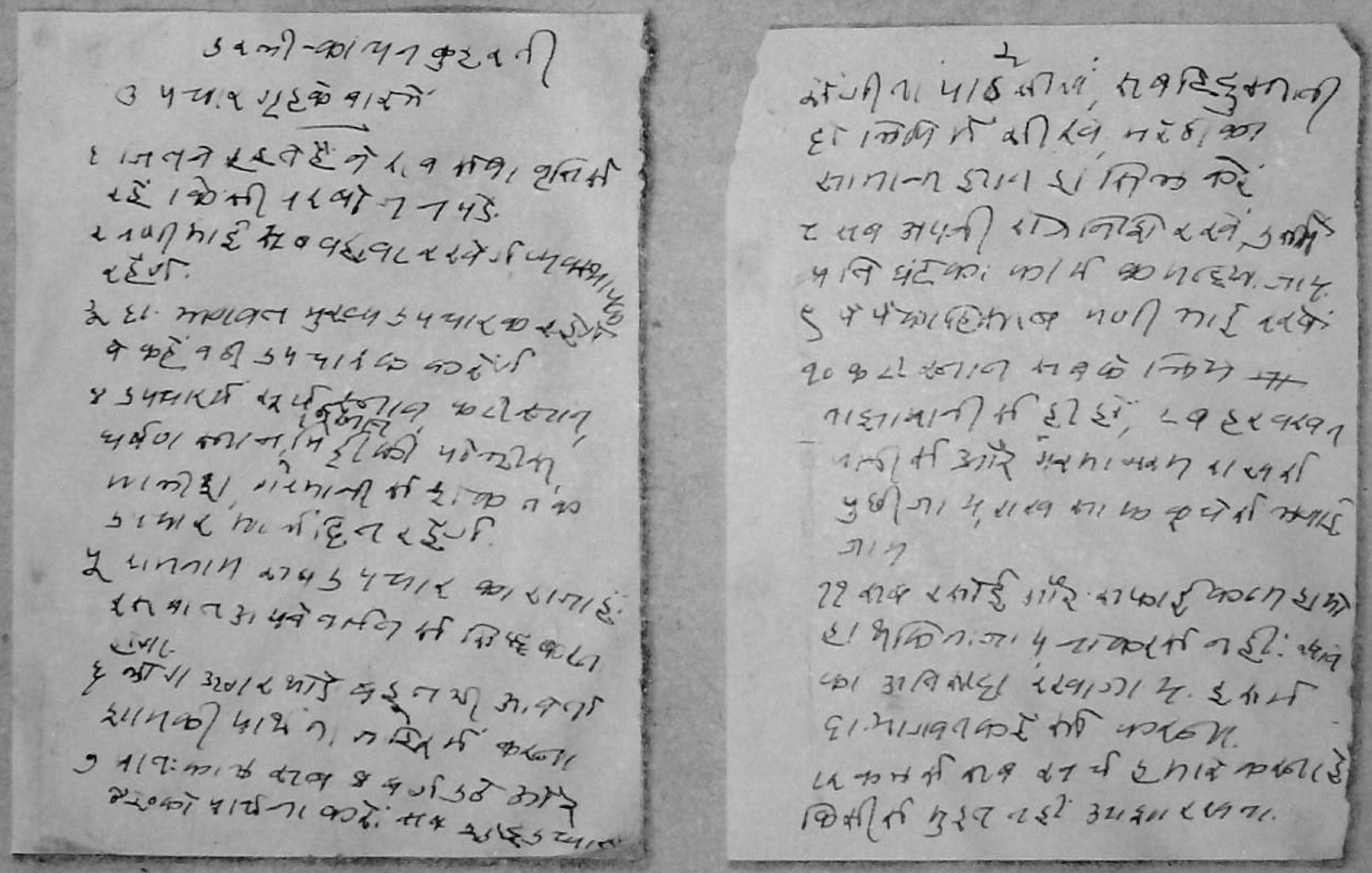
The meeting then terminated.

Poona 30-5-46 [illegible] Chairman

JP

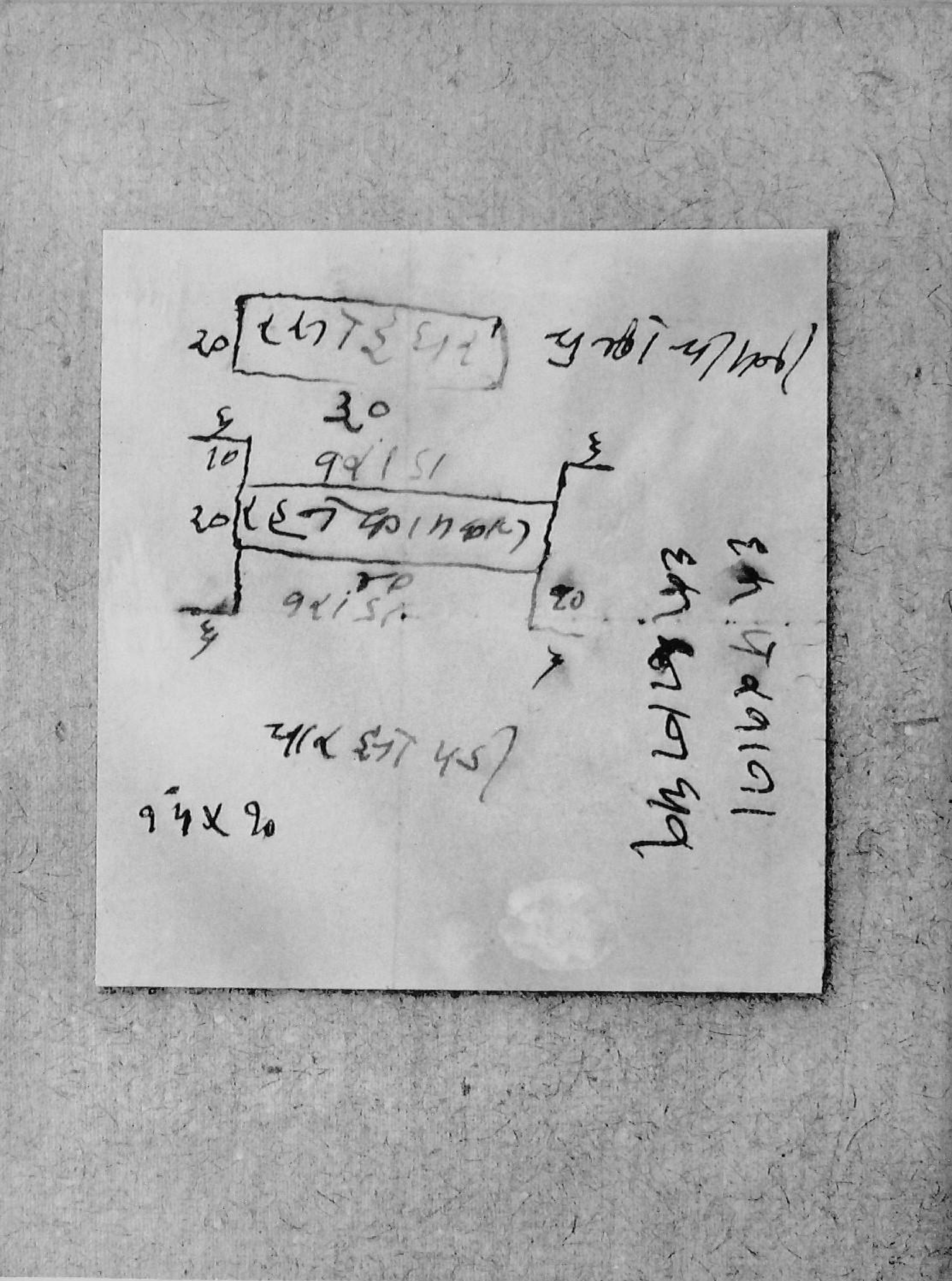
Courtesy: All-India Nature Cure Trust, Uruli

Minutes of the fifth meeting of the trustees of the All-India Nature Cure Federation held at Poona on March 7, 1946



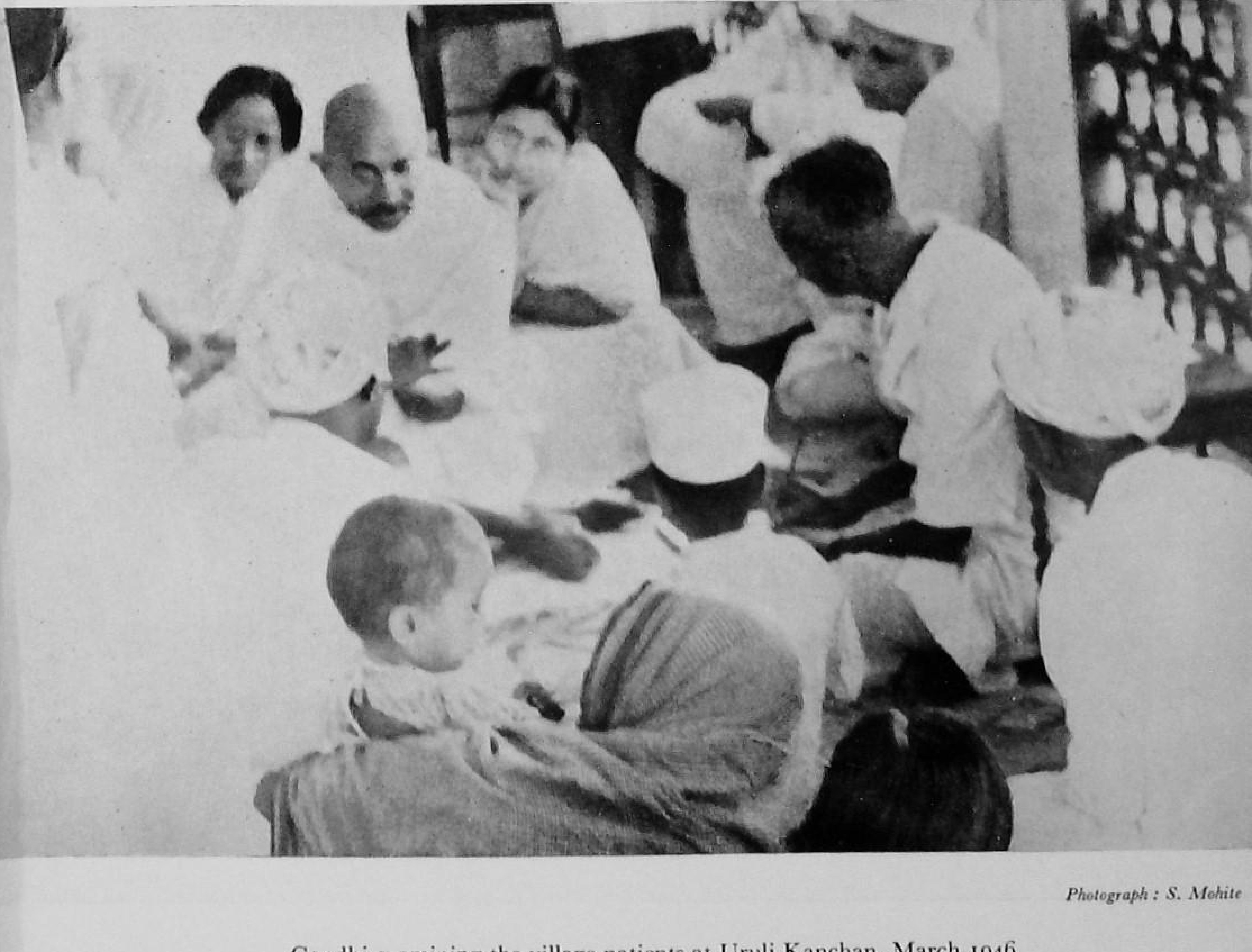
Courtesy : All-India Nature Cure Trust, Uruli

Gandhi's instructions for conducting the Nature Cure Clinic at Uruli Kanchan, Poona, March 1946



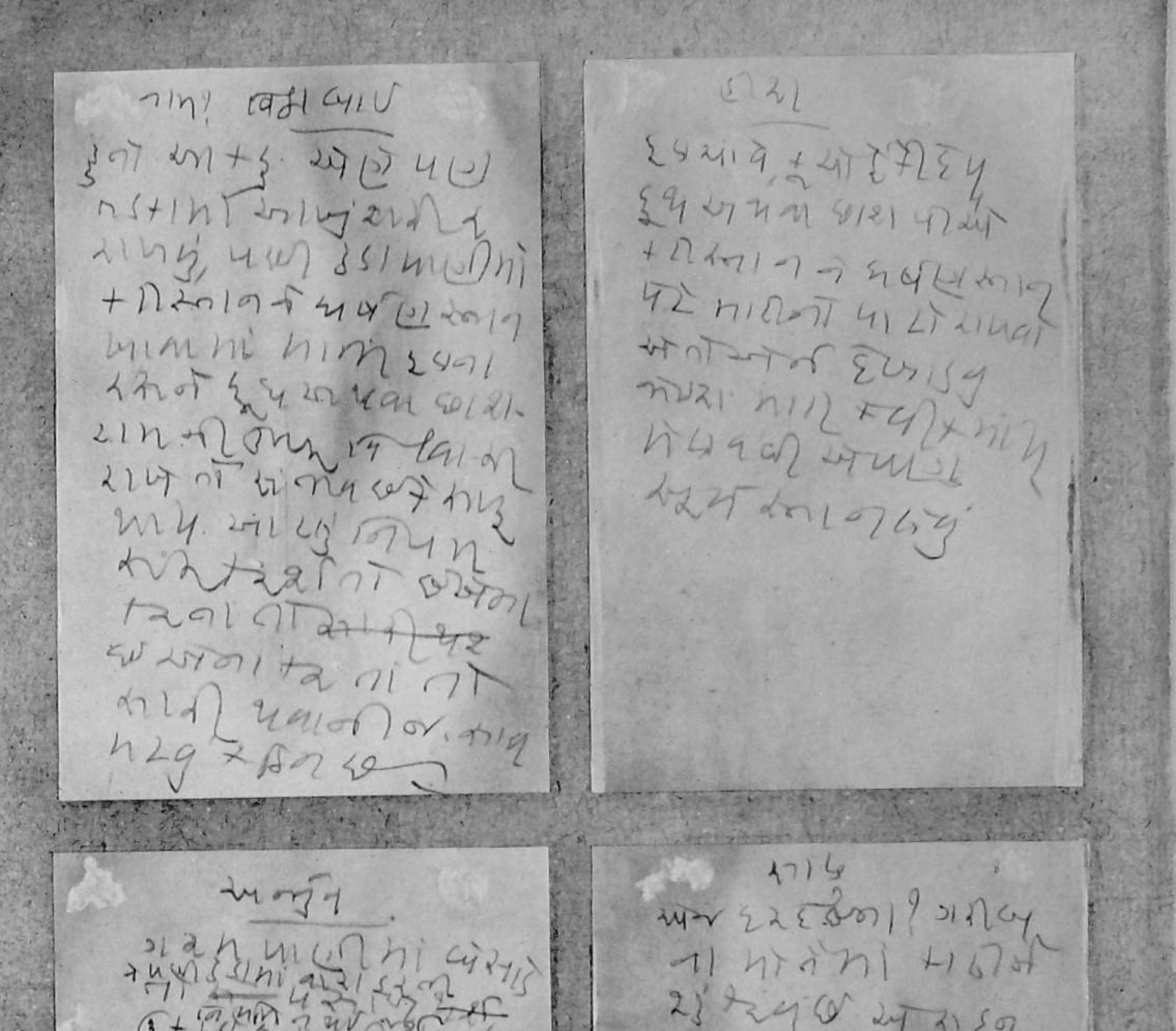
*Courtesy : All-India Nature Cure Trust, Uruli*

A plan for a nature cure clinic at Uruli drawn by Gandhi, March 1946

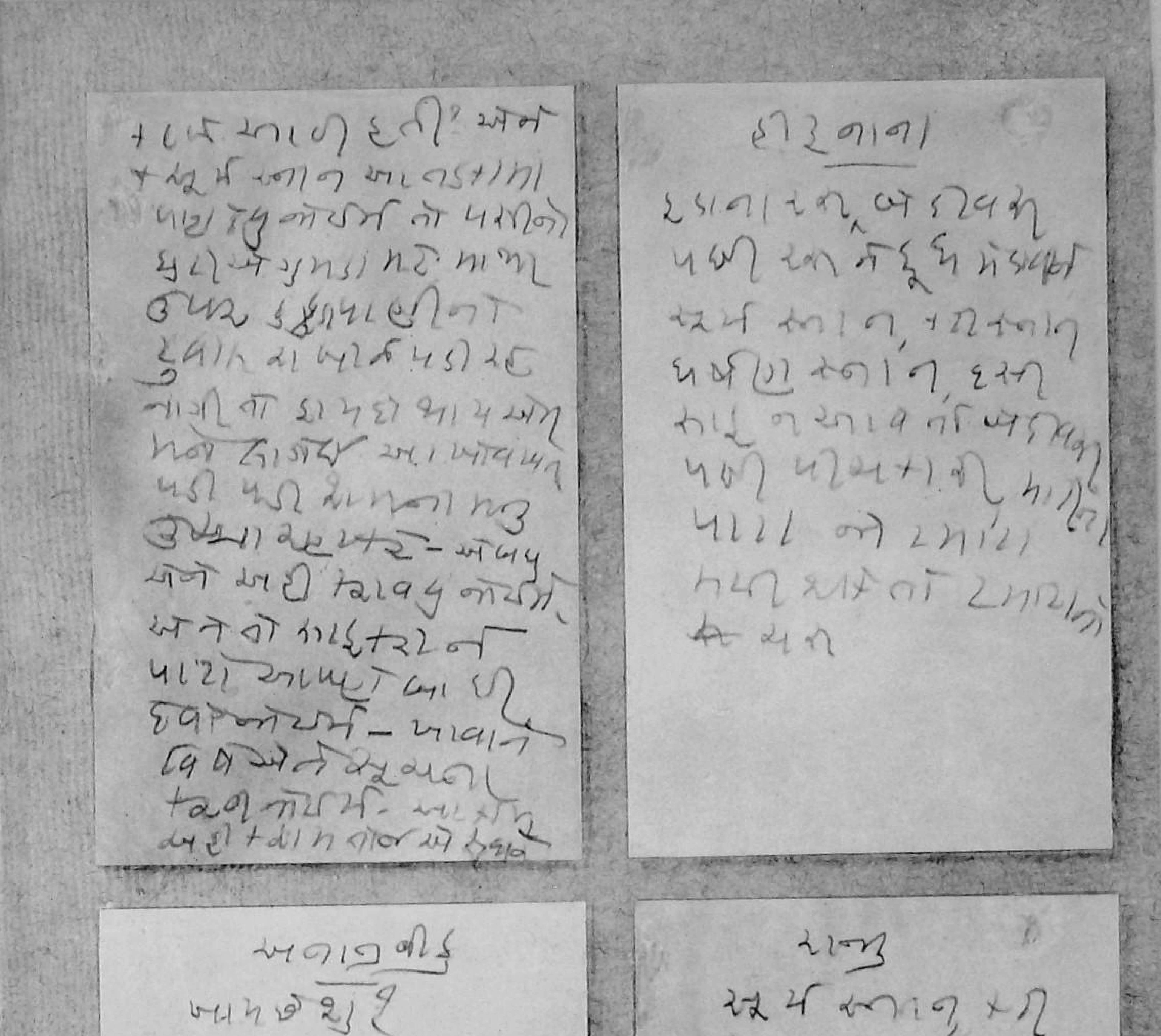


*Photograph : S. Mohite*

Gandhi examining the village patients at Uruli Kanchan, March 1946

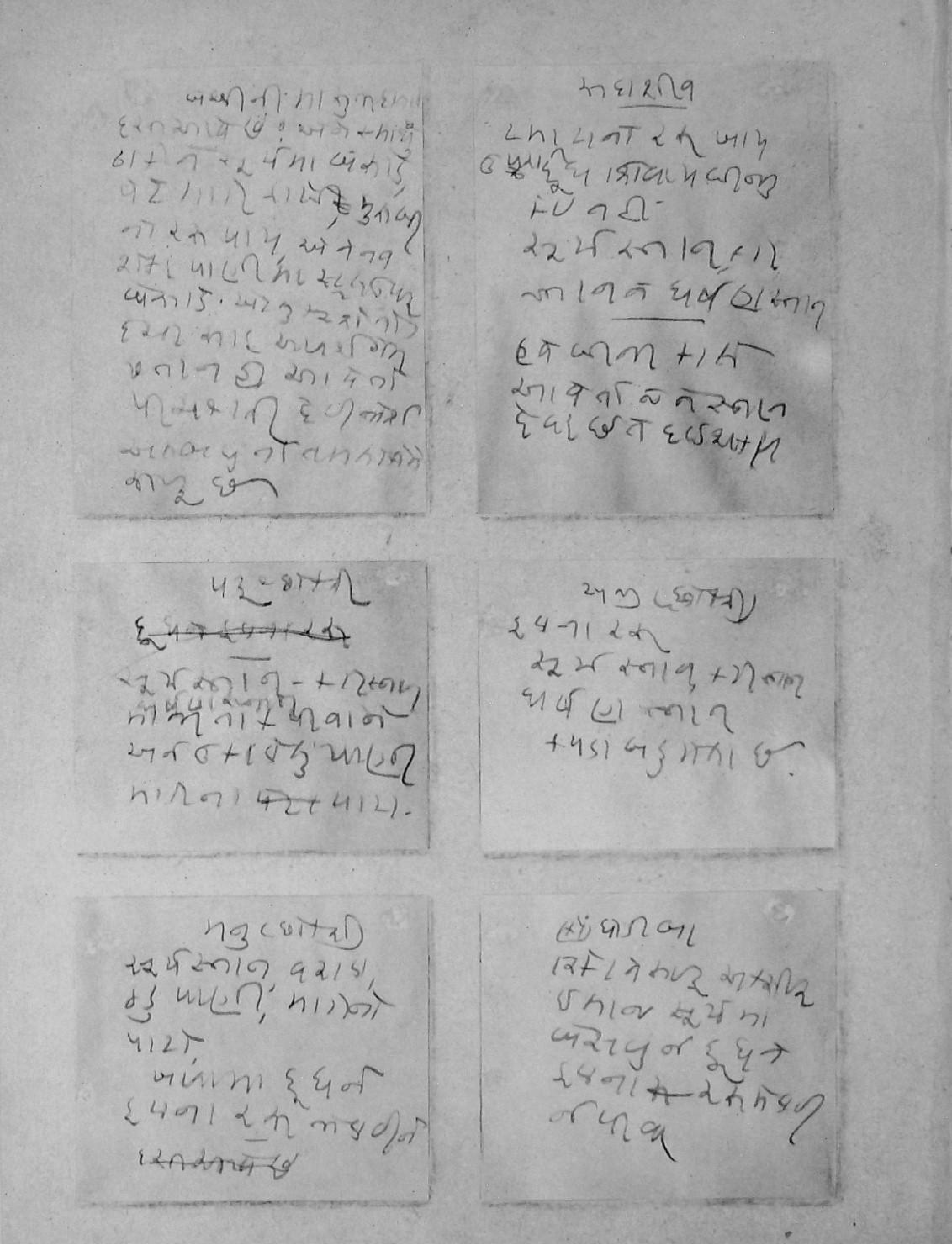


Nature cure prescriptions to individual village patients at

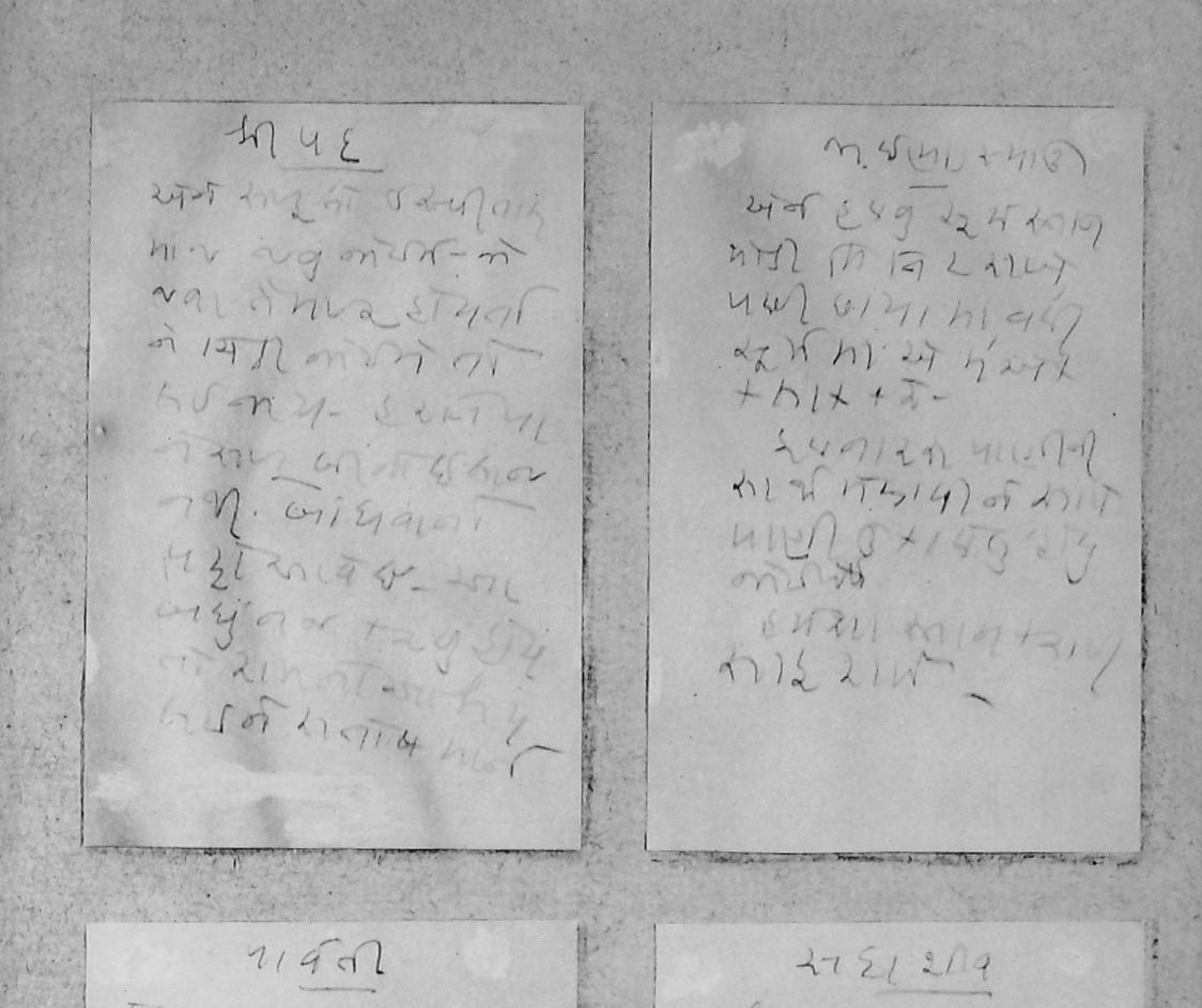


Courtesy: *All-India Nature Cure Trust, Uruli*

Uruli drafted by Gandhi in his own hand, March 25, 1946

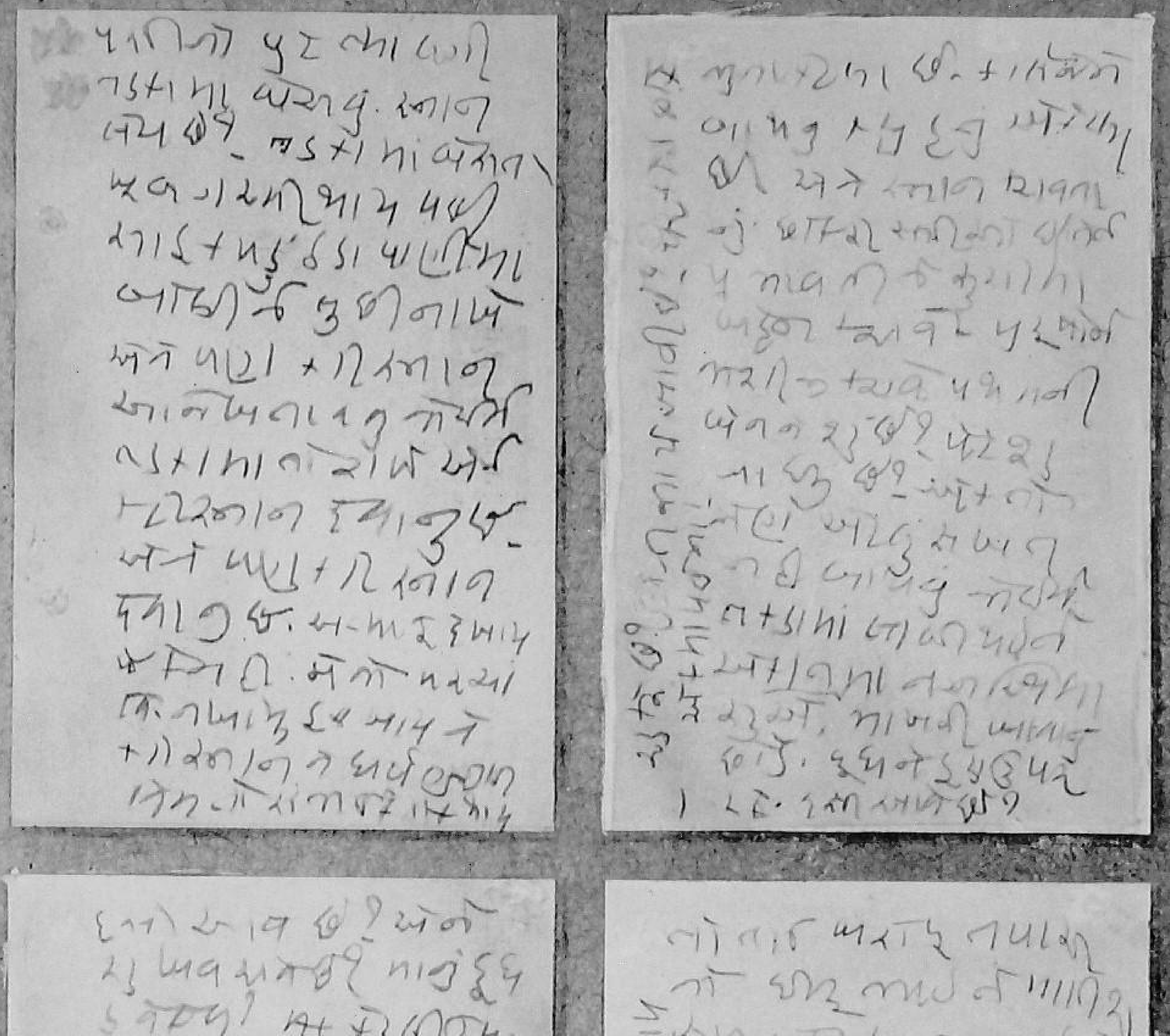


Gandhi's nature cure prescriptions emphasizing the use of the five elements of nature—earth,



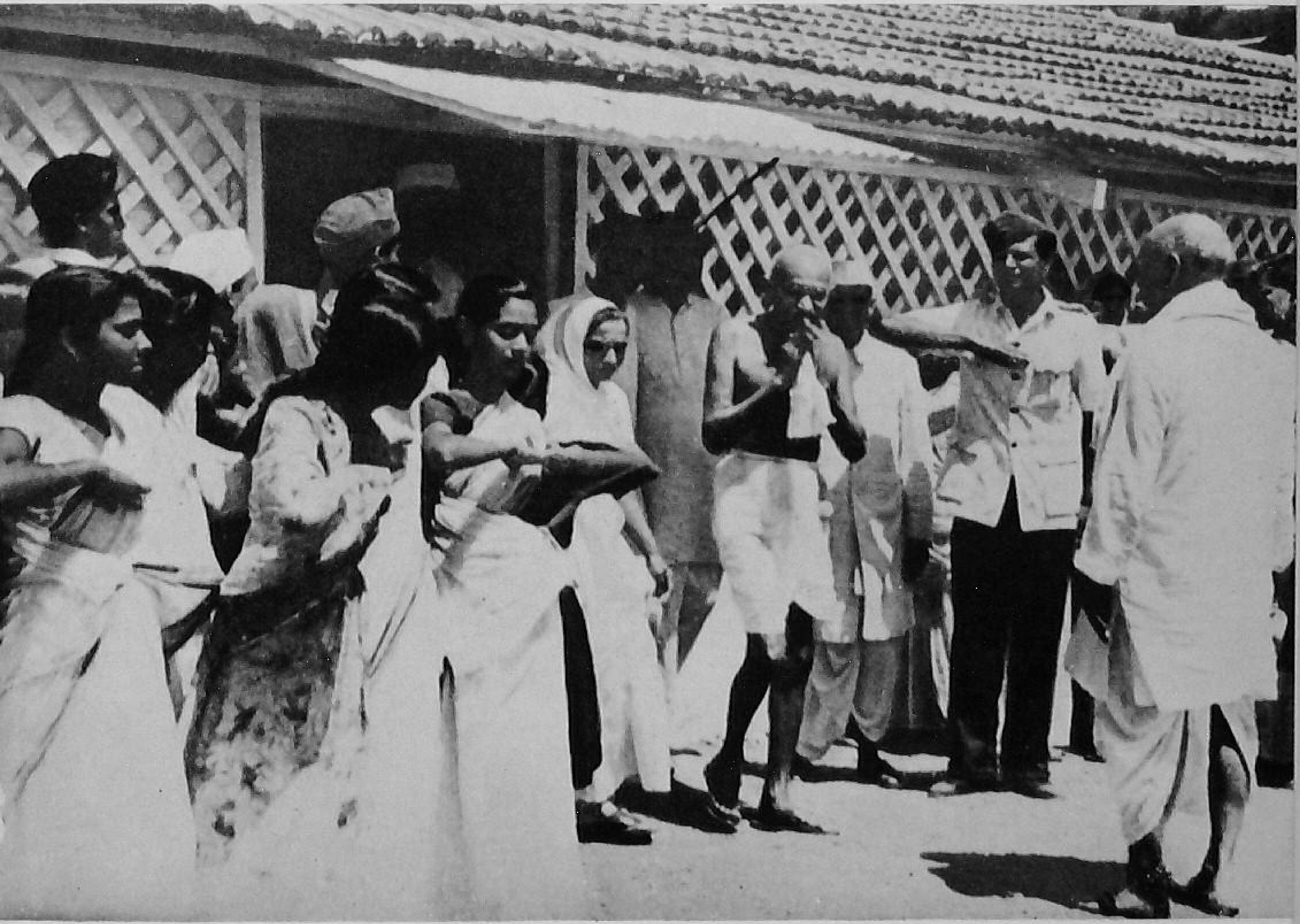
*Courtesy : All-India Nature Cure Trust, Uruli*

water, air, sun and sky — plus Ramnam to the patients at the Uruli village, March 1946



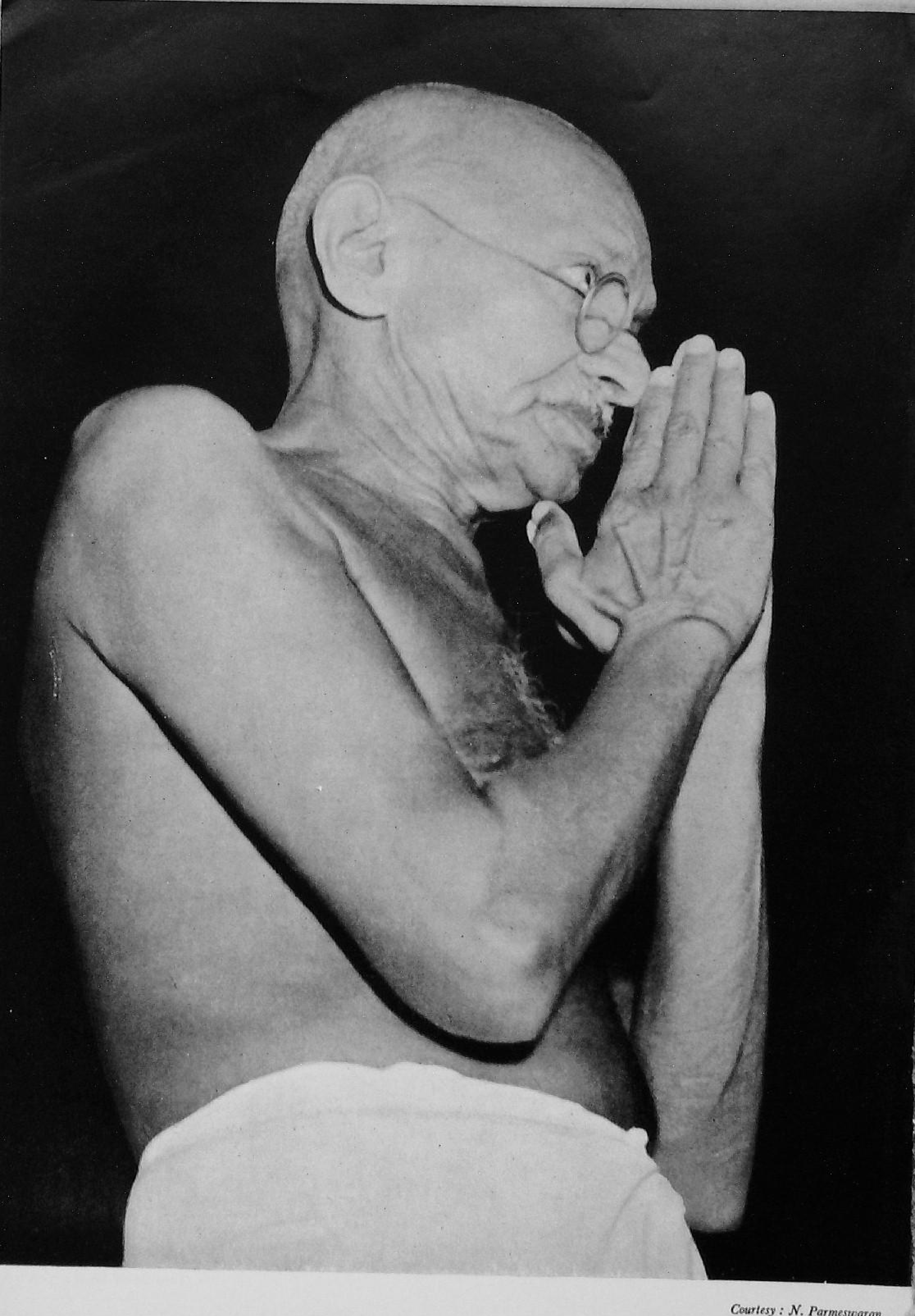
*Courtesy : All-India Nature Cure Trust, Uruli*

Gandhi's nature cure treatment consisting of the sun bath, mud pack, hip bath, massage, fruit juice and milk diet etc. prescribed to the village patients at Uruli, March 1946



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

During his stay in the Harijan quarters at Worli, Bombay, March 31, 1946



*Courtesy : N. Parmeswaran*

Gandhi at Bombay, March 1946

ourselves of God's blessing of fresh and pure air by sleeping within doors with the doors and windows shut. One may shut the doors and windows, if he is afraid of thieves at night. But why should one shut oneself up?

"To get fresh air, one must sleep in the open. But it is no good sleeping in the open, only to breathe dust and the dirt-laden air. The place where you sleep must be free from both. Some people cover their faces as a protection against dust and cold. But it is a remedy worse than the disease. Then there is the evil habit of breathing through the mouth. Mouth is the organ of ingestion. It is not the organ of breathing. The air passing through the nasal passages is filtered and is purified and, at the same time, warmed up, before it enters the lungs.

"Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing the refuse and rubbish, or otherwise dirtying the ground, sins against man and nature. Man's body is the temple of God. Anyone who fouls the air that is to enter that temple desecrates it. He takes the name of Rama in vain."

Gandhi warned them that they should be prepared to find in him a very hard taskmaster. If he stayed in their midst, he would neither spare himself nor them. He would visit their homes, inspect their streets, their drains, their kitchens, their latrines. He would tolerate neither dust, nor dirt anywhere.

"Why has he got involved in nature cure in the evening of his life?" asked the curious. Gandhi replied:

"The still small voice within me whispers: 'Why bother about what the others say? You have confidence in your capacity, having followed nature cure as a hobby for over half a century. If you hide this talent and don't make use of it, you will be as a thief. It will ill become you. Remember the teaching of first verse of *Ishopanishad* and surrender all you have to Me. There is really nothing that belongs to you. Only you fancied that something was yours. It is all Mine. Give it also to My creatures like the rest. It will not in any way jeopardize your other work, provided only that you have cultivated perfect detachment. You have entertained the desire to live up to 125 years. Its fulfilment or otherwise should not be your concern. Yours is only to understand and do your duty and be careful for nothing.' These are the thoughts that haunt me. It is my third day in Uruli village. The number of patients who come for help is

daily increasing. They feel happy and I feel happy in serving them. I am receiving the co-operation of the local people. I know that if I can enter the hearts of the people here, illness will be banished and this village will become a model of cleanliness and of health. But if this does not happen, what is that to me? I have only to do the behest of the Master."

There was hardly a day, when a group of Indian military men did not contact him. They met him during his morning walks, they were at his evening prayer gatherings. "We are soldiers," they said apologetically and added, "but we are soldiers of Indian freedom."

"I am very glad to hear that," said Gandhi. "For, so far, you have mostly been instrumental in the suppression of Indian freedom. Have you heard of Jallianwala Bagh?"

"Oh, yes. But those days are past. We were in those days like the proverbial frog in the well. We have now seen the world, our eyes have been opened."

"We admit we are mercenaries," interpolated another soldier. "But our hearts are no longer so."

"I am glad to hear that," remarked Gandhi. "But let me tell you my use of that expression was not intended to cast any reflection upon you. It was only descriptive of a soldiery that serves a foreign government for a living. My use of that expression at that time brought a hornet's nest around my ears. I could not withdraw it; I said our present army system should go."

"What would be our position, when India is independent?" asked still another soldier.

"Why, you will fully share that independence and breathe the air of freedom with your countrymen," replied Gandhi. "Independent India will surely have need of you. You have had military training. You have learnt the lesson of camaraderie under common danger. It would be a bad day, indeed, if the moment that peril is lifted, the lesson is lost."

"But, in free India, you will not be pampered, as you are today," he continued. "You won't have these lavish privileges with which a foreign government bribes you at the expense of India's poor. India is destitute. You cannot serve her, unless you are prepared to share her destitution. Unless you are prepared to forgo your privilege, you will feel sorry when independence comes, and you will sigh for the return of old times and old masters."

"There was a time," remarked one of them, "when we were not allowed to read any civil newspaper. And now we go and tell our officers that we are going to see our greatest leader, and no one dares to stop us."

"I know," Gandhi said in reply, "there is a new ferment and a new awakening among all the army ranks today. Not a little of the credit for this happy change belongs to Netaji Bose. I disapprove of his method, but he has rendered a signal service to India by giving the Indian soldier a new vision and a new ideal."

"May we shout slogans?" they asked, and having got his consent they shouted "Jai Hind" and "Netaji-ki-jai".

"Is Netaji alive?" wondered everyone and Gandhi wrote a note in *Harijan* on it from Uruli on March 30:

"Some years ago it was announced in the newspapers that Subhas Chandra Bose had died. I believed the report. Later the news was proved to have been incorrect. Since then, I have had a feeling that Netaji could not leave us, until his dreams of swaraj had been fulfilled. To lend strength to this feeling was the knowledge of Netaji's great ability to hoodwink his enemies and even the world for the sake of his cherished goal. These were the only reasons for my belief that he was alive.

"I have not got the ability for foretelling the future. I have no strength, except what comes from insistence on truth. Non-violence too springs from the same insistence. God alone knows the absolute truth. Therefore, I have often said, Truth is God. It follows that man, a finite being, cannot know absolute truth. Therefore, I had nothing but my instinct to tell me that Netaji was alive. No reliance can be placed on such unsupported feeling.

"On the other hand, there is strong evidence to counteract the feeling. The British Government is party to that evidence. Captain Habibur Rahman has said he was present at the time of Netaji's death and has brought back his charred wrist watch. Another of his companions, Shri Ayer, met and told me that my instinct was wrong and I should abandon the feeling that Subhas Chandra Bose was alive. In the face of these proofs, I appeal to everyone to forget what I have said and, believing in the evidence before them, to reconcile themselves to the fact that Netaji has left us. All man's ingenuity is as nothing before the might of the one God. He alone is Truth and nothing else stands."

He discouraged blind hero-worship and wrote in *Harijan* under "A Temple to Gandhiji":

"Under this strange heading, I read a newspaper cutting sent by a correspondent to the effect that a temple has been erected where my image is being worshipped. This I consider to be a gross form of idolatry. The person who has erected the temple has wasted his resources by misusing them, the villagers who are drawn there are misled, and I am being insulted in that the whole of my life has been caricatured in that temple. The meaning that I have given to worship is distorted. The worship of the charkha lies in plying it for a living, or as a sacrifice for ushering in swaraj. Gita is worshipped not by a parrot-like recitation but by following its teaching. Recitation is good and proper only as an aid to action according to its teaching. A man is worshipped only to the extent that he is followed, not in his weaknesses, but in his strength. Hinduism is degraded, when it is brought down to the level of the worship of the image of a living being. No man can be said to be good before his death. After death too, he is good for the person who believes him to have possessed certain qualities attributed to him. As a matter of fact, God alone knows a man's heart. And hence, the safest thing is not to worship any person, living or dead, but to worship perfection which resides only in God, known as Truth. The question then certainly arises, as to whether possession of photographs is not a form of worship, carrying no merit with it. I have said as much before now in my writings. Nevertheless, I have tolerated the practice, as it has become an innocent, though a costly fashion. But this toleration will become ludicrous and harmful, if I were to give directly or indirectly the slightest encouragement to the practice above described. It would be a welcome relief, if the owner of the temple removed the image and converted the building into a spinning centre, where the poor will card and spin for wages, and the others for sacrifice and all will be wearers of khaddar. This will be the teaching of the Gita in action, and true worship of it and me."

The political atmosphere was surcharged with hatred towards the British. "Quit India" spirit was still in the air. Explaining its implications, Gandhi wrote from Uruli:

"In terms of non-violence, 'Quit India' is a healthy, potent cry of the soul. It is not a slogan. It means the end, through means, purely truthful and non-violent, of foreign rule and domination. It

does not mean the foreigner's destruction, but his willing conversion to the Indian life. In this scheme, there is no room for hatred of the foreigner. He is a man, even as we are. It is fear of him, that gives rise to hatred. Fear gone, there can be no hatred.

"Thus, his conversion implies our conversion too. If we cease to be inferiors, he cannot be our superior. His arsenals and his weapons, typified in their extreme in the atom bomb, should have no terror for us. It follows that we may not covet them. We often make the mistake of thinking that we must first have things, before we cease to covet them. This tempting argument leads to the prolongation of the agony. Must I do all the evil I can, before I learn to shun it? Is it not enough to know the evil to shun it? If not, we should be sincere enough to admit that we love evil too well to give it up.

"Let us assume that the foreign rule is ended. What should the foreigner do? He could hardly be considered free, when he was protected by the British arms. As a free man, he will discover that it was wrong to possess privileges, which the millions of India could not enjoy. He will live doing his duty, as behoves a son of India. He will no longer live at India's expense. On the contrary, he will give India all his talents and, by his services, render himself indispensable to the land of his adoption.

"If this is true of the European, how much more true must it be of those Anglo-Indians and others, who have adopted the European manners and customs, in order to be classed as Europeans demanding preferential treatment? All such people will find themselves ill at ease, if they expect continuation of the favoured treatment, hitherto enjoyed by them. They should rather feel thankful that they will be disburdened of the preferential treatment, to which they had no right by any known canon of reasoning and which was derogatory to their dignity.

"We have all—the rulers and ruled—been living so long in a stifling unnatural atmosphere, that we might well feel in the beginning that we have lost the lungs for breathing the invigorating ozone of freedom. If the reality comes in an orderly, that is, a non-violent manner, because the parties feel that it is right, it will be a revealing lesson for the world."

Uruli village, unknown to anyone except to its residents until he took up his abode there, was the meeting place of all the women agents, so far appointed by Kasturba Memorial Trust to organize

and supervise the work in the different provinces. Asked as to what work he would lay most emphasis upon, so far as women were concerned, Gandhi said that sanitation and hygiene, owing to the lack of knowledge of which the villagers suffered so greatly, should take the first place. Then there were the evil customs which had to go, the useless expenditure on jewellery—and he made everyone laugh by his graphic description of a much bejewelled woman patient with a huge nose ring, ear-rings, necklace, bracelets and anklets complete who had visited him as a patient that very morning. It was hard to know what should come first. "Really, all work in its own place is of equal importance." There is the very great necessity of teaching women the care and upbringing of children, discipline in their own lives in every department, including eating. He placed maternity almost last. But nothing could be achieved without friendship with the women. That was the first and basic desideratum.

Were the women to be given the wheel as a revolutionary weapon as he had said it was in the hands of a Jawaharlal? His answer was "no". How could it be such in the hands of an ignorant woman? But if every woman in India span, then a silent revolution would certainly be created of which a Jawaharlal could make full use. Unless steam generated was put to proper use, the engine would not run and the person generating the steam might himself be scalded by it even unto death.

Among the women members were some staunch feminists, who were very anxious to run the show by women alone. To them, Gandhi said that the men, who were there, were serving the memory of one who was instinctively a village woman. Long before, he himself had taken to village life, as being the ideal life for service, Kasturba had shown her preference for it. Her heart was in Phoenix, even in the far off South African days, when he himself worked in a town. The men who were honouring her memory were only serving until such time, as women were ready to take their place. "I am the only one whom you may find it hard to get rid of, for I have always counted myself as a woman. I believe I know your sex and your needs better than you do yourselves."

He said that the Kasturba Trust would have even a bigger place in national service when freedom was there, than it had today. For all would go to the winds, if the women were not properly trained. He hoped that every worker in the trust would have a great deal

to give to the new government. "But we have got to generate that strength within us. We may not be frightened of making mistakes. Man is born to make mistakes, but the great thing is to see our mistakes and learn from them. We should magnify our own errors, so as to be deterred from falling into them again. Those who imagine that they never make mistakes are to be feared."

He agreed with one of the members, when she said, that it was a great tragedy that the uplift of the women had to be an item on the constructive programme.

"Have we yet to find ourselves?" asked the worker.

"Yes, indeed," replied Gandhi. "And where better can you find yourselves, than by being true to the highest traditions of the Indian women, by serving your unhappy sisters today?"

## *Swaraj Round The Bend*

### 1946

For the first time in Bombay, Gandhi stayed in Harijan quarters at Worli, when he arrived on March 31, 1946 by a special train from Poona. His sojourn was limited to about six hours. Hostile demonstrations, started by a section of the untouchables the previous day, continued on his arrival in Bombay.

He gave the reasons for his stay in the untouchable quarters during his visits to Bombay and Delhi in *Harijan* of March 31:

"Friends are puzzled over my keen desire to reside in the bhangi quarters in the cities or towns I may visit. To ask why I have not entertained that desire all these years would be more pertinent. To answer why I did not have the desire long ago must be reserved for a future occasion. Just now, I must answer why the desire has come upon me at all.

"I have for some time been saying, that we must all be bhangis or untouchables. But it has worried me that I have not accorded the statement with corresponding action. It may not be possible to establish complete accordance with the wish. But it ought to be done so far as possible. Whilst this thought was agitating me, I got the news that in Gujarat only one well and one temple is shared with the Harijans, and this in Karadi. Whether the news is true or not is immaterial here. The material thing is the reaction produced on my mind by the news. To be angry was madness. The news quickened the desire in me for residence in the untouchable quarters. I said to myself: 'If I lived apart from Harijans, what right had I to question the action of others, who went further in their adherence to untouchability? But whether the others changed their mode or not was not for me to judge. If it was my duty to reside in the Harijan quarters, I must perform it, irrespective of the reaction of the step on the others.' This is the thought which is possessing me, and is goading me to the adumbrated action.

"Consequently, I have asked Sheth R. D. Birla to arrange, if at all possible, for my residence in the untouchable quarters, when I happen to be in Bombay. I have also wired to Sheth G. D. Birla to arrange likewise for Delhi. Incidentally, I notice that some of the critics rejoice that I shall no longer reside in the Birla House. They do not know that I have been accepting their hospitality for years. I have accepted donations from them for my various constructive activities. The critics do not know of the changes they have imperceptibly made in their life; nor need they or the public in general know these. Such changes are never made for show. At the same time, it is perfectly true that there are wide differences between them and me in outlook. This is no cause for sorrow or wonder. All true change comes from within. Any change brought about by pressure is worthless. I am neither so vain nor so foolish, as to hope that all would follow me. And who can say, whether I am right or others in what we are doing? It is enough, if all of us abide by what we consider to be right. We are all His creatures to do His will, not ours. Doing so, we should all be friends to one another."

Gandhi and his party arrived in Delhi on April 1. Some fifty demonstrators waving the black flags raised anti-Congress slogans and hurled stones at Gandhi's hut. As in Bombay, so in Delhi, Gandhi put up in the Harijan quarters. Two small tents and a *shamiana* were put up on the precincts of the Valmiki Mandir to improvise extra accommodation for Gandhi's party. "I have of late been saying," he remarked at the prayer meeting, "that the Hindus have to become *atishudras*, not merely in name, but in their thought, word and deed. For that token, scavenging is not enough. I have, therefore, decided that I must go and actually live among the Harijans in the Harijan quarters."

"I, however, do not delude myself with the belief," he continued, "that by staying here I am sharing the actual life with the Harijans. I have seen some of the Harijan quarters, and the squalor, the dirt and the filth in the midst of which the Harijans live. I know too that this place has been brightened up. Indeed, I feel embarrassed by the amenities that have been provided here by Sheth Birla for me and my party. My coming to stay here, I hope, is my first step, not the last. It is my constant prayer and I look forward to the day, when I would actually go and stay in a Harijan hut, and partake of the food, they may provide me there. In the meantime, it gives me some

satisfaction to be able to live in this dharmashala surrounded by the Harijan dwellings on all sides."

Referring to the hostile demonstration, Gandhi observed: "How can I feel angry with them? I can quite understand their pent-up resentment, at the way in which they have been treated by the so-called *savarnas*. They might even want to wreak vengeance. There is such a glaring contradiction between our profession and practice. They have a right to feel impatient. I can only plead with them to bear with the Hindu society. An age-old evil cannot be eradicated in a day. I know that it has to go, or Hinduism must perish. In the meantime, the least expiation that we can make is to share with the Harijans their disabilities, and to deny ourselves the privileges which the latter cannot share. The present conditions under which they live should be intolerable even for a day to a decent-minded person. I pray for the time, when the condition of life, as regards the sanitation, cleanliness, etc. in the Harijan quarters will be such that even a person like myself might be able to go and stay there without any compunction."

Gandhi's stay in Delhi was mainly in connection with the constitutional negotiations going on in the capital. He had been discussing lately with an English friend the difficult task ahead of the Cabinet Mission. There was an unprecedented upsurge for independence among the masses on the one hand, and on the other, "the unholy combination" at bottom among the Hindus and the Muslims for a joint violent purpose. "I could have understood it, if they had combined from top to bottom," Gandhi stated. "That would, of course, have meant delivering India over to the rabble. I would not want to live up to 125 years to witness that consummation. I would rather perish in the flames."

"The mission are coming fresh after a bloody victory," he added. "They have now an opportunity to add to it the laurels of a bloodless peace. It will be a glorious thing for them and the world, if they rise to the occasion and do justice to India, even though it might mean reducing themselves—it will not be so in fact—to insignificance. That would be the height of non-violence. But miracles have happened in the world."

The work which brought him here occupied Gandhi's time from early in the morning till night. He was aware of the deep hatred of the British rule that was in the people's breast. To forestall and to

prevent the conflagration of the deep-seated hatred was his constant concern. "I have been praying to God to give me the right word, so that it will induce those to whom it is addressed to act with the courage and wisdom which the occasion demands."

During the week, Gandhi accepted an invitation to attend a silent prayer service of the Quakers and he paid visit to the I.N.A. camp and hospital. Speaking at a prayer meeting, he said:

"Let me share with you the thoughts that have been crowding in my mind since yesterday. India has accorded to the released I.N.A. men a right royal welcome. They have been acclaimed as national heroes. Everybody seems to have been swept off his feet before the rising tide of popular sentiment. I must, however, frankly confess to you that I do not share this indiscriminate hero-worship. I admire the ability, the sacrifice and the patriotism of the I.N.A. and of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. But I cannot subscribe to the method which they adopted and which is incompatible with the one followed by the Congress for the last twenty-five years for the attainment of independence . . .

"For me, the visit to the I.N.A. men in detention was a matter of pure duty. It gave me supreme satisfaction to be able to meet them, and they on their part received me with a warmth of affection which I shall always treasure. I have interpreted their welcome as a token of their recognition in me of a devoted servant of the country.

"Netaji was like a son to me. I came to know him as a lieutenant, full of promise, under the late Deshbhandhu Das. His last message to the I.N.A. was that, whilst on foreign soil they had fought with arms, on their return to India they would have to serve the country as soldiers of non-violence under the guidance and the leadership of the Congress. The message which the I.N.A. has for India is not adoption of the method of appeal to arms for settling disputes—it has been tried and found wanting—but of cultivating non-violence, unity, cohesion and organization.

"Though the I.N.A. failed in their immediate objective, they have a lot to their credit of which they might well be proud. The greatest among these was to gather together, under one banner, men from all religions and races of India, and to infuse into them the spirit of solidarity and oneness to the utter exclusion of all communal or parochial sentiment. It is an example which we should all emulate.

If they did this under the glamour and romance of fighting, it was not much. It must persist in peace. It is a higher and more difficult work. We have to die performing our duty, and without killing. For that, we shall need to cultivate the attributes of a *sthitaprajna*, as set forth in the Gita.

"Far more potent than the strength of the sword is the strength of satyagraha. I said so to the I.N.A. men, and they were happy to tell me, as I was to hear, that they had realized this and they would hereafter strive to serve India as true soldiers of non-violence under the Congress flag."

Mr. Ayer of the Azad Hind Government wanted to discuss with Gandhi the question of issuing a news bulletin in the Roman script for the I.N.A., as proposed by the Central I.N.A. Relief Committee. "The committee are not enamoured of the Roman script," he said. "They have accepted it only as a temporary expedient. Otherwise, we shall have to print it in three different scripts—Hindi, Urdu and Tamil—and it would mean a lot of expenditure. Moreover, it would only be a continuation of the old tradition. The men had got used to the Roman script, while they were in the Indian Army, and so retained it when they were operating in South-East Asia." Gandhi said: "You forget that you are not working in South-East Asia today, but in India. May I ask, if these men ever write to their wives and children in the Roman script?"

"Never," said Mr. Ayer. "They write one and all in Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, or any of the other Indian scripts."

"This means," remarked Gandhi, "that they all know one or the other Indian script. I could understand your wanting to adopt the Roman script as a temporary makeshift, if we had no script of our own. But to adopt Roman script for Hindustani, which has got two acknowledged scripts, is only a sign of the psychological conquest that the English have made over us. In order to conquer the English who had conquered you, you adopted the English garb, that is, the Roman script for your bulletins in South-East Asia. You should have discarded this symbol of cultural conquest and insisted on having your bulletin in two Indian scripts rather than in the Roman script. The latter was primarily adopted for the sake of the British officers and men who had to learn Hindustani in order to rule over us. They solved the difficulty presented by the permutations and the combinations of the Urdu alphabet and tempted us by their typewriters,

their telegraph and printing machines, which use the Roman script. We succumbed. We may not hark back to the symbol of our cultural conquest, when we are out to end the agelong slavery of India *in toto*. When you served in the British Army, it was with the prospect of getting rewards in the form of decorations, comfortable pay, pensions, grants of land, etc. But now you don't want such temptations. You serve only for the independence and honour of your country. You do not want the easy way.

"India will soon have independence. Do not think that there will be one script for Hindustani all at once. It will come, when you and I have honestly and diligently learnt both the scripts—not before. That is the least price we have to pay for independence."

In support of his argument, he cited the parallel of South Africa where they had everything in two languages. Government gazette was published in two languages, and so were text-books for use in schools. "And it is not called partition but Union of South Africa. And to maintain this union, they have four capitals, one for each province. That is the way of a free and freedom-loving people."

His visit to the I. N. A. prisoners in Kabul Lines was followed by a similar visit to thirty-five I.N.A. prisoners who were detained in the Red Fort. The absence of the third party had enabled them to obliterate all the communal distinctions and develop a perfect spirit of camaraderie in exile, but in detention all those distinctions were again being brought home to them.

"We never felt any distinction of creed or religion in the I.N.A.," remarked one of them. "But here we are faced with 'Hindu tea' and 'Muslim tea'. What are we to do?"

"Why do you suffer it?" asked Gandhi.

"No, we don't," they said. "We mix 'Hindu tea' and 'Muslim tea' exactly half and half, and then serve. The same with food."

"That is very good," said Gandhi laughing.

Summing up his reactions at a prayer meeting, he said that one I.N.A. officer in the Red Fort had told him that they were finally convinced that India could not win or retain her independence except through non-violence. They had further assured him that after their release they would serve India as true soldiers of non-violence. "We shall disdain to depend on anybody's charity for our support. We would rather dig the ground and till the land, than compromise our self-respect by living on subscriptions."

"I have told them," said Gandhi, that "they would be sadly disillusioned, if they thought that a free India would be able to provide them all those emoluments and honours and perquisites, which the foreign government gave to the army men by the exploitation of the masses, while education, public health and the allied nation-building activities were starved. India was a poor country, and her children were born in poverty and grew up in poverty into anaemic, and stunted specimens of humanity. If they wanted to become the true soldiers of India, they must be prepared to share her destitution and try to ameliorate it to the best of their capacity, and not expect to be pampered at the cost of the poor. A true soldier would prefer death to charity."

On April 6, he observed:

"Twenty-seven years ago, when the late Swami Shraddhanandji was alive, satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act was inaugurated on this day. History was made during the following week. For the first time, the entire masses of India, from one end to the other, rose like one man. It was an entirely spontaneous demonstration.

"That was the time, when the Hindus and Muslims for the time forgot their differences. The Ali brothers and I used to go all over the country together like blood brothers. We spoke with one voice, and we delivered the message of Hindu-Muslim unity and swaraj to the masses. We resolved that, thereafter, we should address our prayers to God alone, instead of the British Government, and so satyagraha was born in India. The Ali brothers readily fell in with the programme of a national day of fasting and prayer. The people fasted on the 6th and the 13th of April. They realized that they were all children of the one God, destined to live together and die together in the land of their birth, which was India. They assembled together in their thousands and offered prayers in temples, churches and mosques. The climax was reached, when in Delhi, a monster gathering consisting of both the Hindus and Muslims was held in the Jumma Mosque and was addressed by the late Swami Shraddhanand. It was a glorious day in India's history, the memory of which, we shall always treasure."

Now they had fallen upon evil times, said Gandhi. The hearts of the Hindus and the Muslims were sundered. The air was poisoned with communal bitterness and rancour. One section of Muslims had begun to claim that they were a separate nation. Into the logic of

that claim, he would not go at present. He confessed that it baffled his understanding.

He added: "We commenced our proceedings today with prayer. If we believe in prayer, we cannot fly at one another's throat, or regard anybody as our enemy. At Amritsar, people lost their heads. But we promptly confessed our mistake and made an expiation for it, by fasting and praying to God for forgiveness. To err is human. By confessing, we convert our mistakes into the stepping-stones for advance. On the contrary, a person who tries to hide his mistakes becomes a living fraud and sinks down. Man is neither brute, nor God, but a creature of God, striving to realize his divinity. Repentance and self-purification are the means. The moment we repent and we ask God for forgiveness for our lapse, we are purged of our sin, and new life begins for us. True repentance is an essential prerequisite of prayer.

"Prayer is not a mere lip-service. It must express itself through action. How shall we then pray during the sacred week? We can pray by purging our hearts of any taint of communal hatred and ill will—that might be one form of prayer. Then we can pray by doing sacrificial spinning for the attainment of non-violent swaraj. I have a vivid recollection of how in 1919 every home in the Punjab hummed with the music of the spinning wheel. A mountain of yarn was presented to me on one occasion during my tour, which was never equalled before, nor has it been since, except very recently at Madura during my Madras tour. What are the sisters of the Punjab doing today? That is the question, which you must ask yourselves during this week of introspection. If the four hundred millions of India took to spinning in earnest, and span for sacrifice, that is, not for self, with the name of God in their hearts and with the common purpose of winning India's freedom through non-violence, then their united effort would not only bring us freedom assuredly, but also provide us the means for safeguarding it after it is won, and enable us to point the way out of darkness to the whole world.

"The other day, I was talking to the I.N.A. men in the Red Fort. We were discussing as to what they should do on their release. They assured me that they would, on their release, serve India as the true soldiers of non-violence under the Congress flag. I told them that today a true soldier of India is he, who spins to clothe the naked and tills the soil to grow more food to meet the threatening food crisis.

The Congress has declared that she would carry on the struggle for India's independence, through the method of non-violence. But she has not yet decided, whether she would adhere to that method for the protection of that freedom against possible foreign aggression. To me, it is a self-evident truth, that if freedom is to be shared equally by all—even physically the weakest, the lame and the halt—then they must be able to contribute an equal share in its defence. How that can be possible, when reliance is placed on the armaments, my plebeian mind fails to understand. I, therefore, swear and shall continue to swear by non-violence, that is, by satyagraha or soul force. In it, physical incapacity is no handicap, and even a frail woman or a child can pit herself or himself on equal terms against a giant, armed with the most powerful weapons.

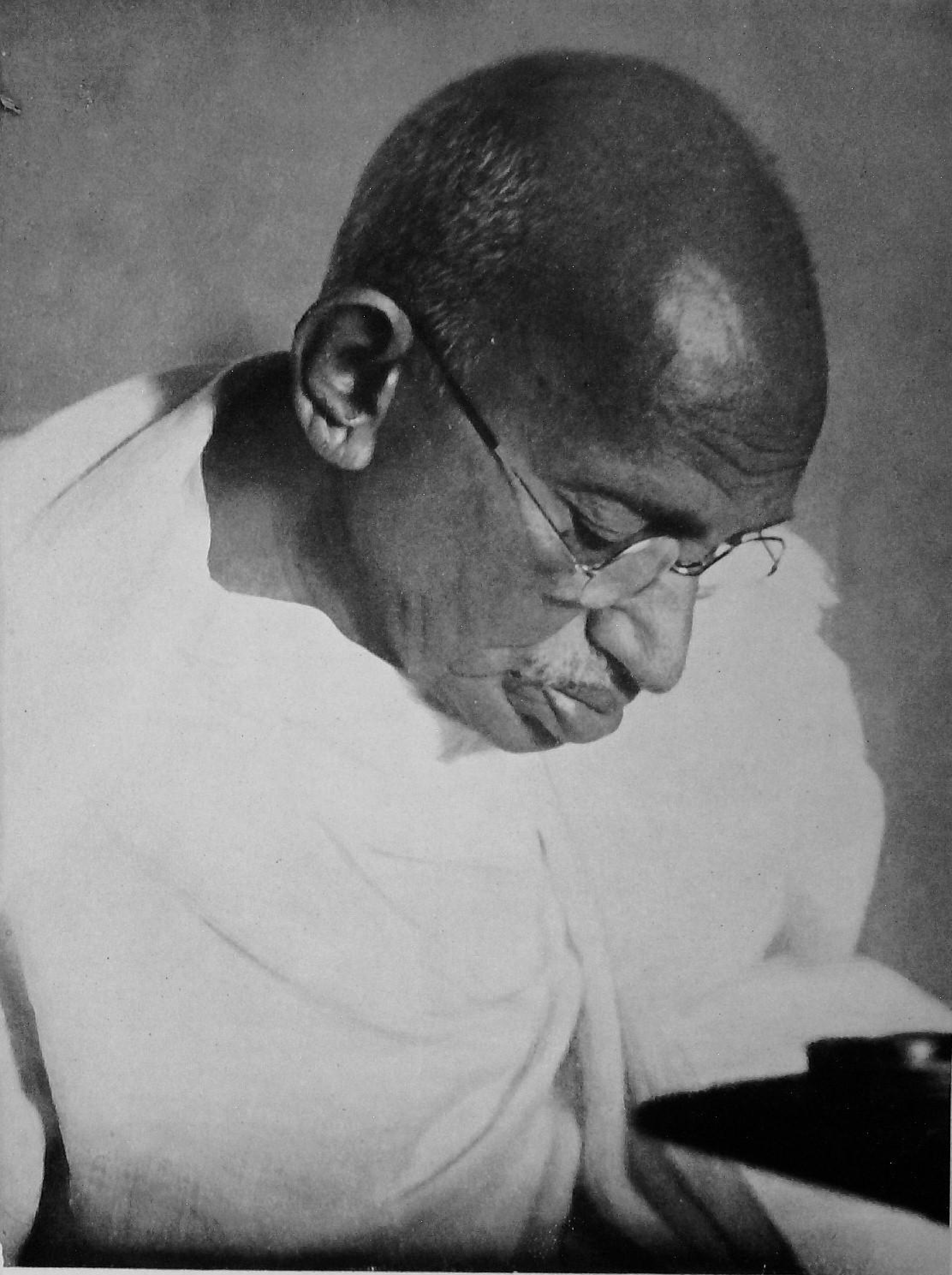
"The eighteen-fold constructive programme with the charkha as its centre is the concrete expression of that spirit in an organized society. Let us now realize that spirit by devoting ourselves prayerfully to the carrying out of the constructive programme during the National Week."

Gandhi harped on the subject of non-violence in an editorial on April 6:

"There is little doubt that India is about to reach her cherished goal of political independence. Let the entrance be prayerful. The prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action.

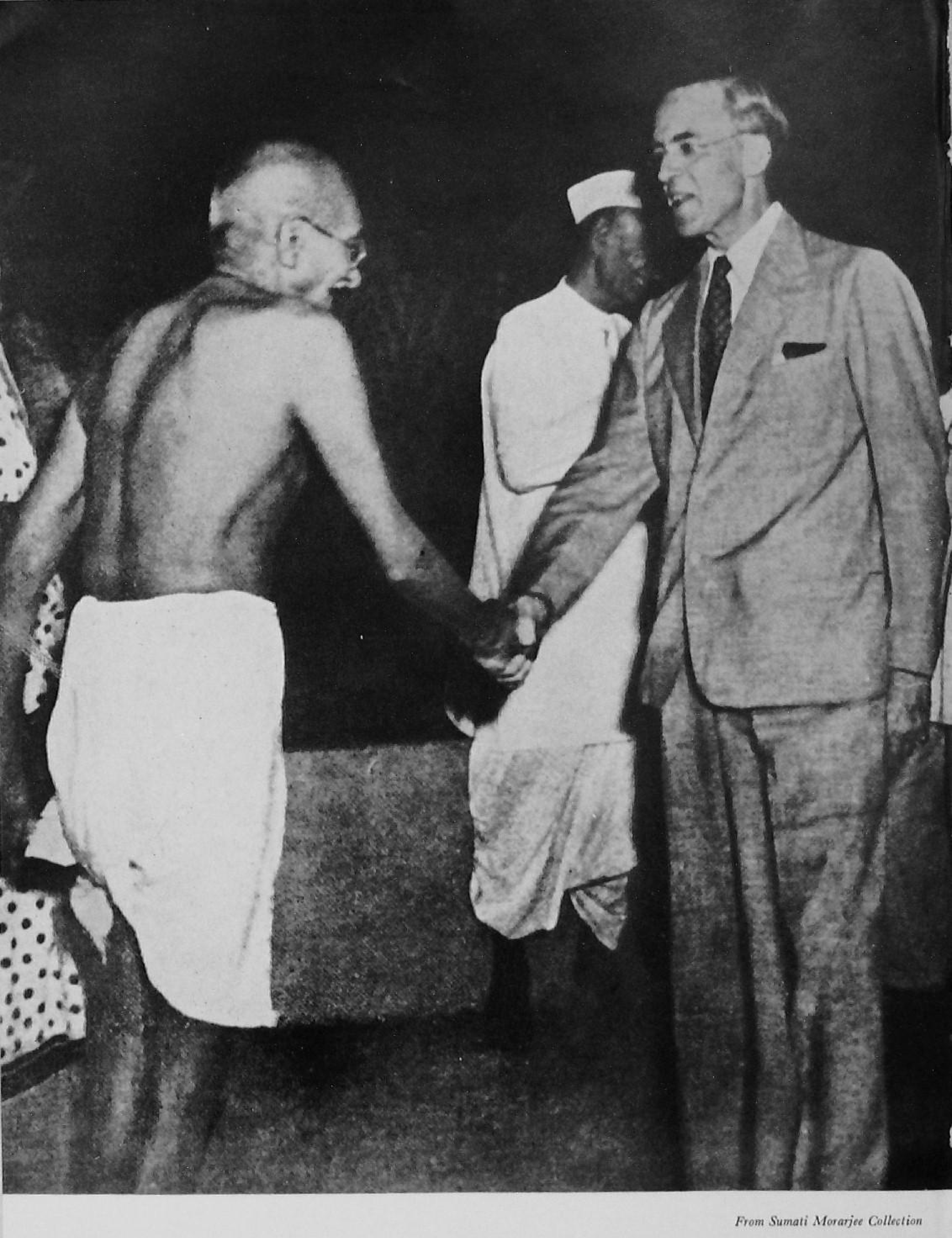
"Let us then pray and find out, what we have meant by non-violence and how we shall retain the freedom gained by its use. If our non-violence is of the weak, it follows that we shall never be able, by such non-violence, to retain the freedom. But it follows also that we shall not, for some length of time, at any rate, be able to defend ourselves by force of arms, if only because we have neither them nor the knowledge of their use. We have not even the requisite discipline. The result is that we shall have to rely upon another nation's help, not as equals, but as pupils upon their teachers, if the word 'inferiors' jars upon our ears.

"Hence, there is nothing but non-violence to fall back upon for retaining our freedom, even as we had to do for gaining it. This means exercise of non-violence against all those, who call themselves our opponents. This should not mean much for a man who has used himself to non-violence for nearly three decades. It is summed up in



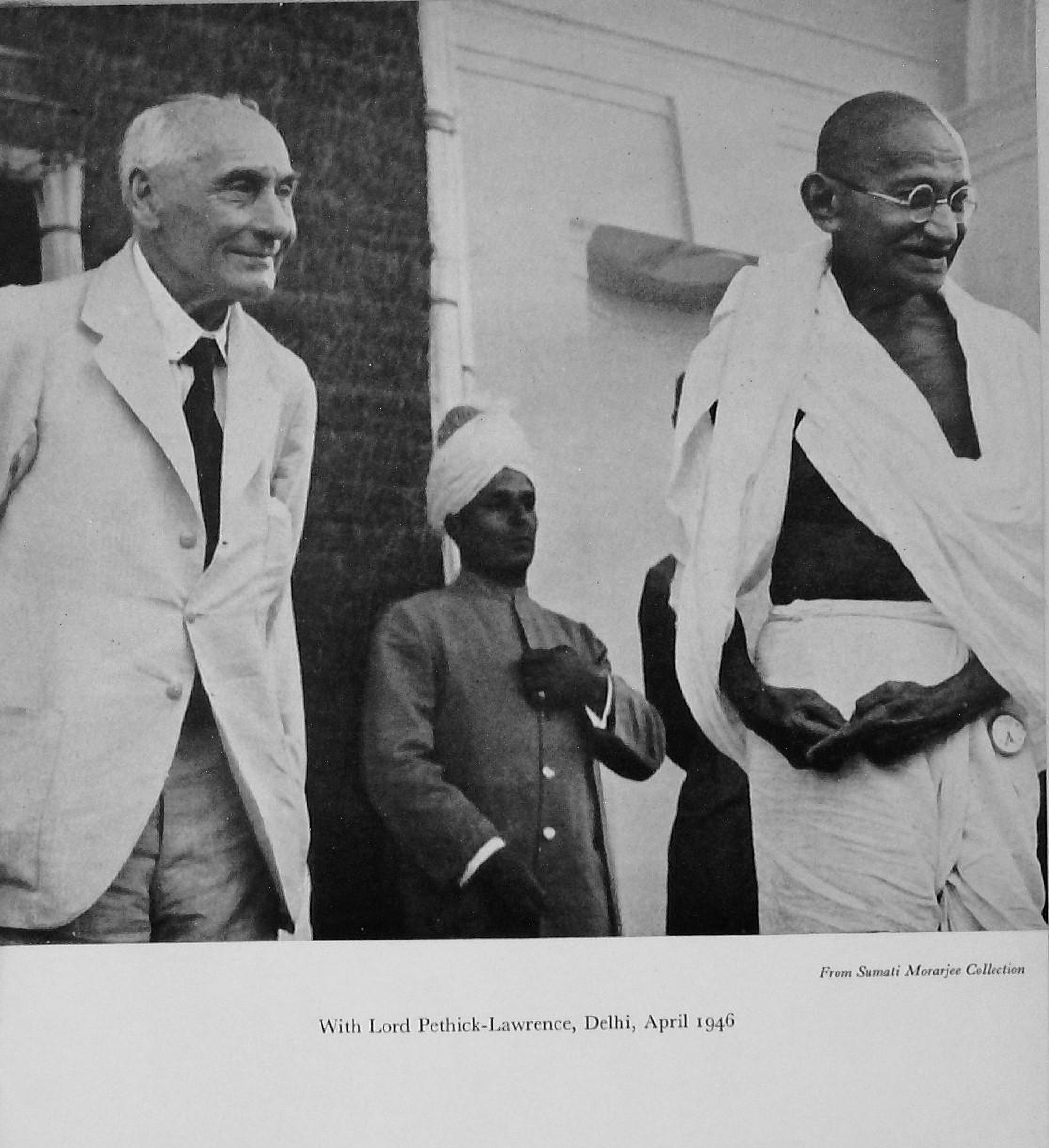
Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi, April 1946



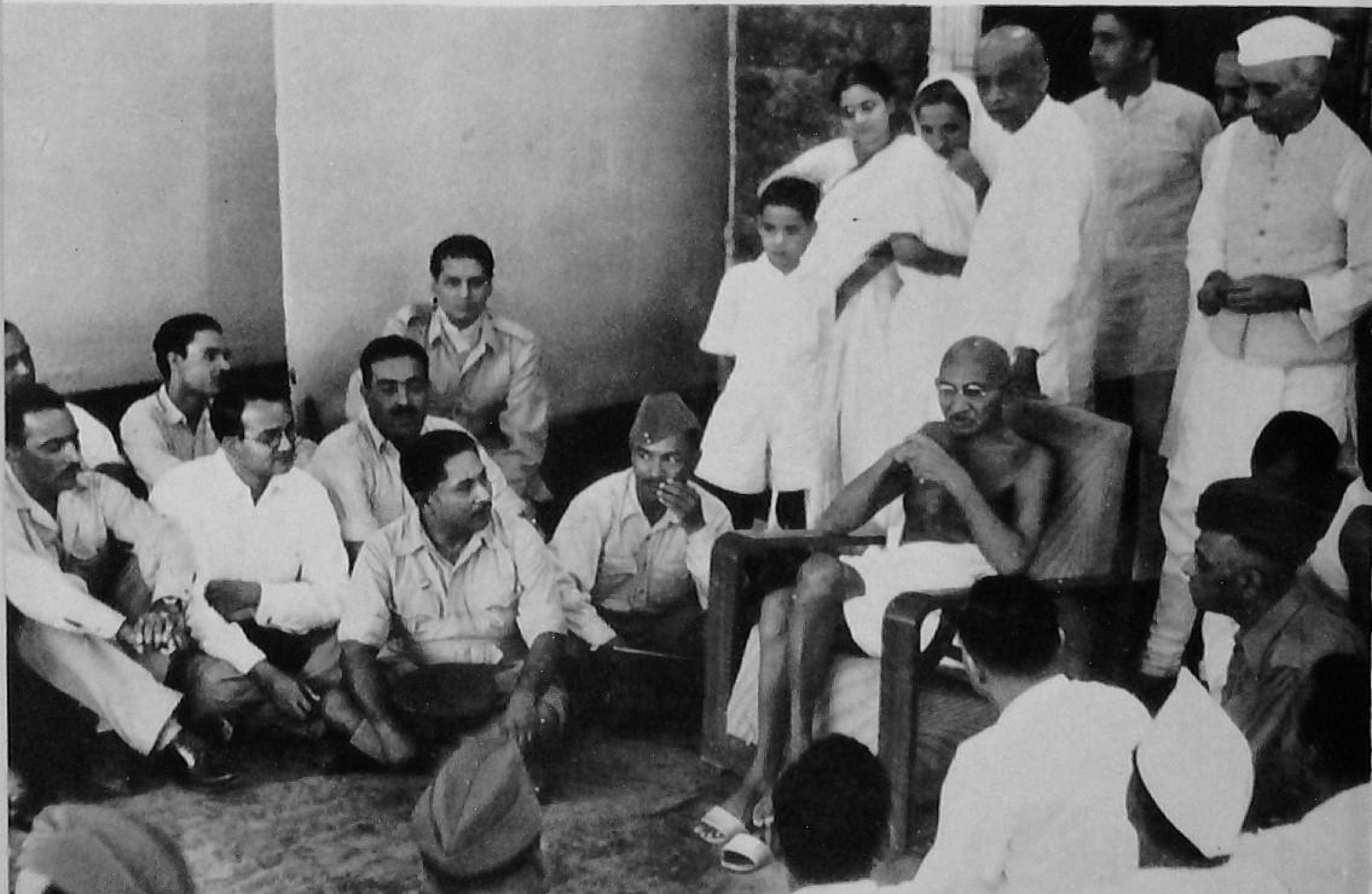
*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi greets Sir Stafford Cripps at the Bhangi Colony, Delhi, April 1946



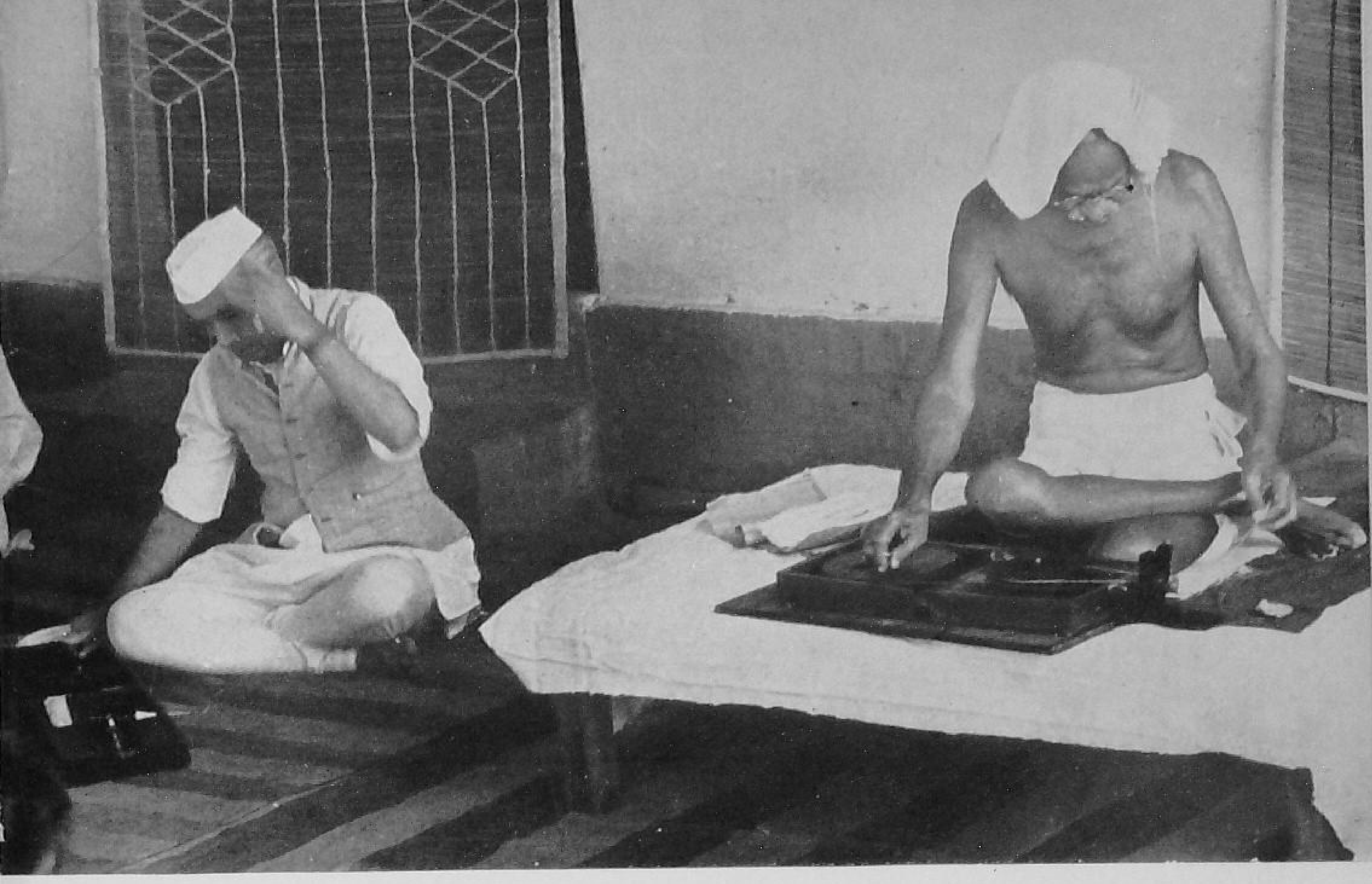
*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

With Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Delhi, April 1946



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

With the I. N. A. Officers at the Bhangi Colony, Delhi, April 1946

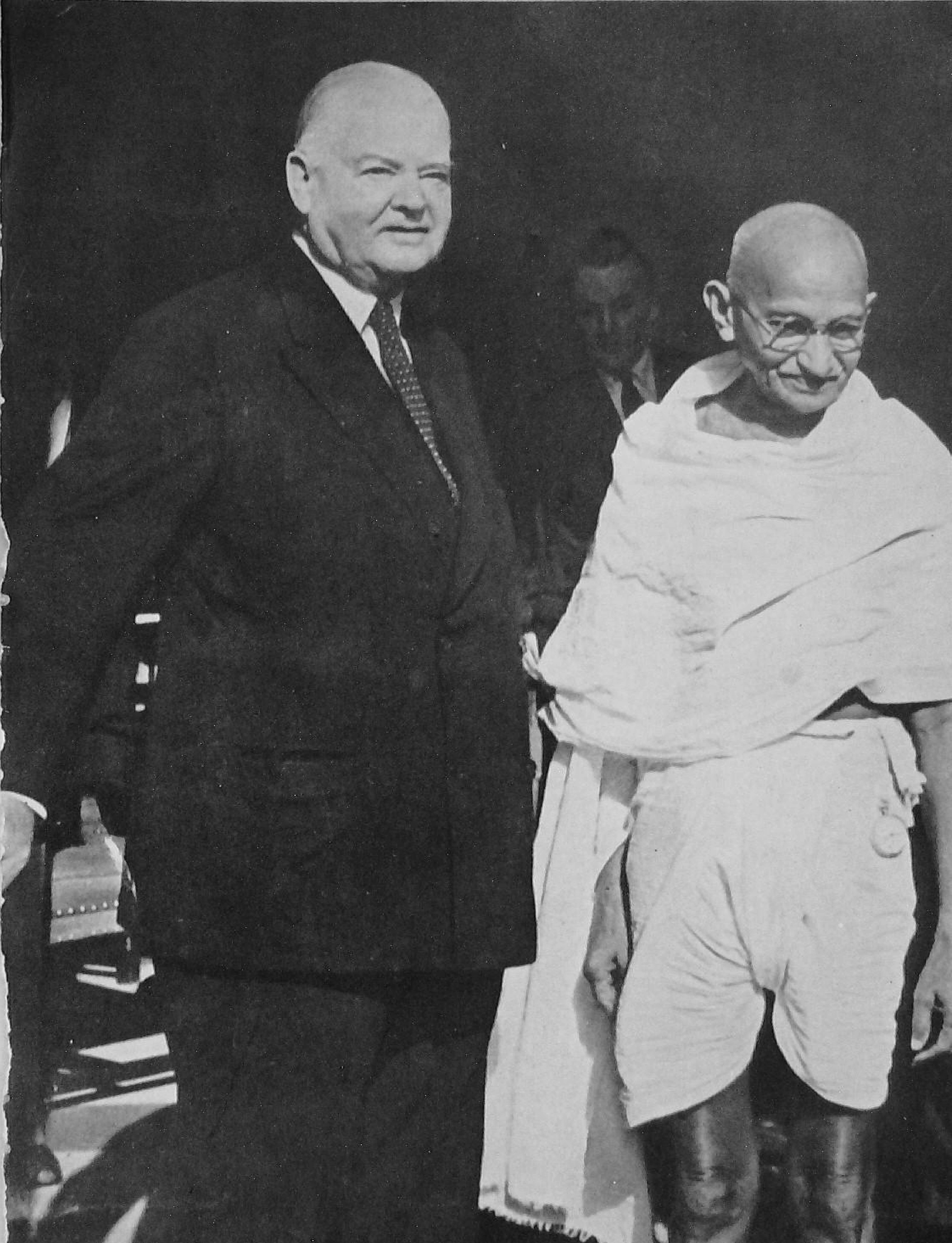


*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi and Nehru at the mass spinning during the National Week, Delhi, April 1946

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi's visit to ailing Pandit Malaviya, Delhi, April 1946



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

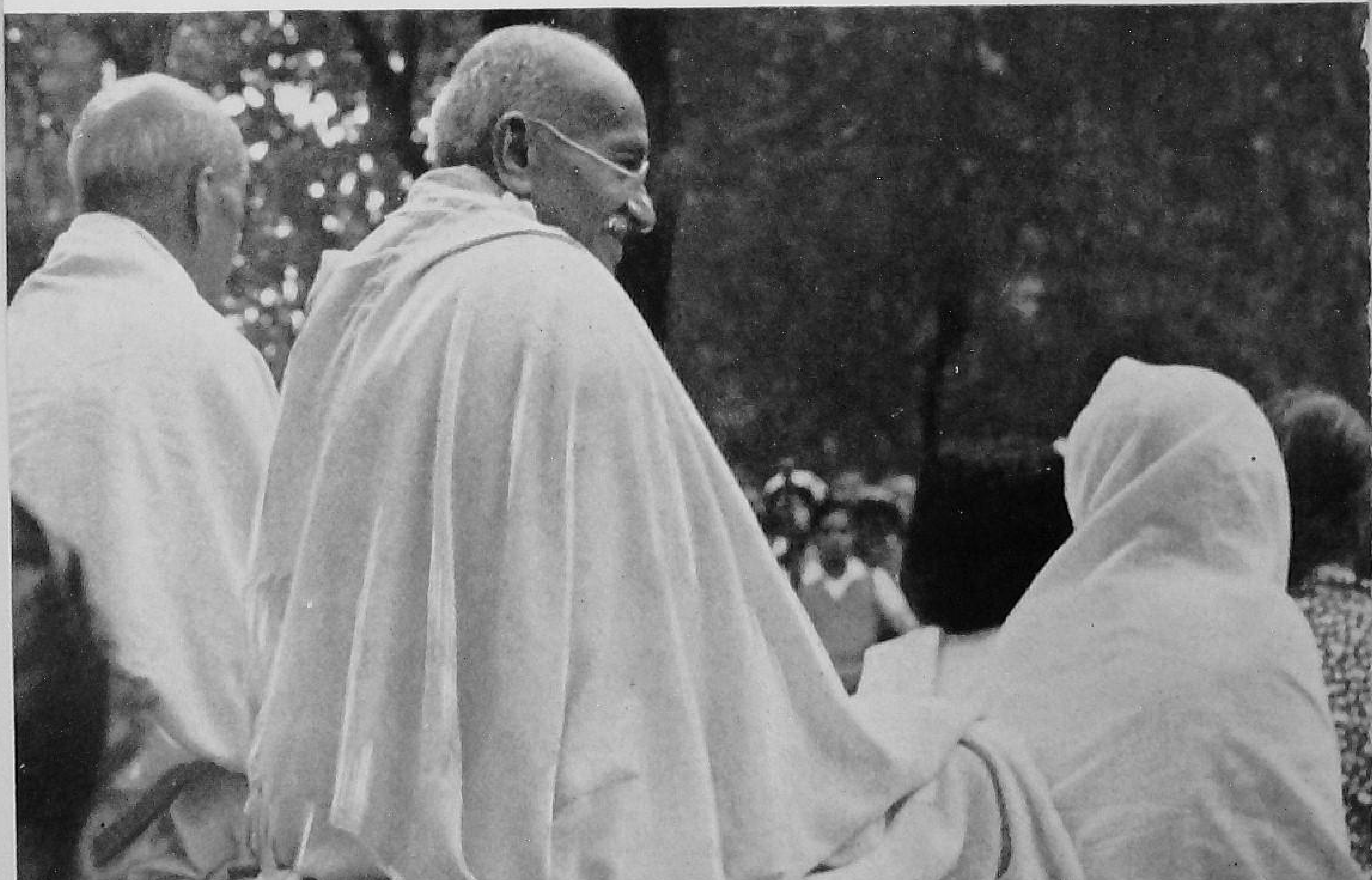
With Mr. Hoover, Delhi, April 1946

*Courtesy : Hindustan Standard*

At the Manor Ville, Simla, May 1946

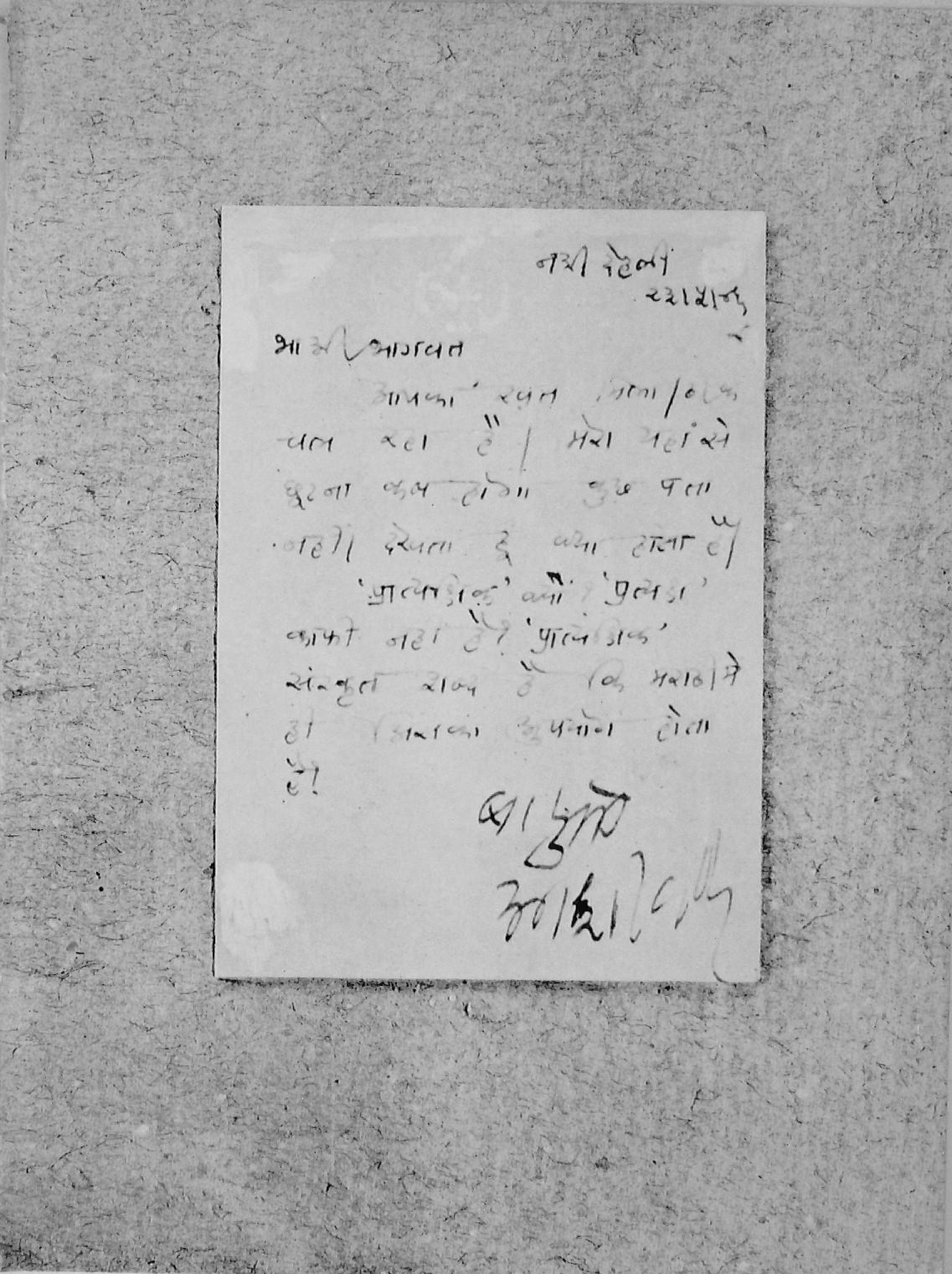
*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

On the way to a prayer meeting, Simla, May 1946



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

At the evening prayers, Simla, May 1946



नयी देहली
२३।५।४६

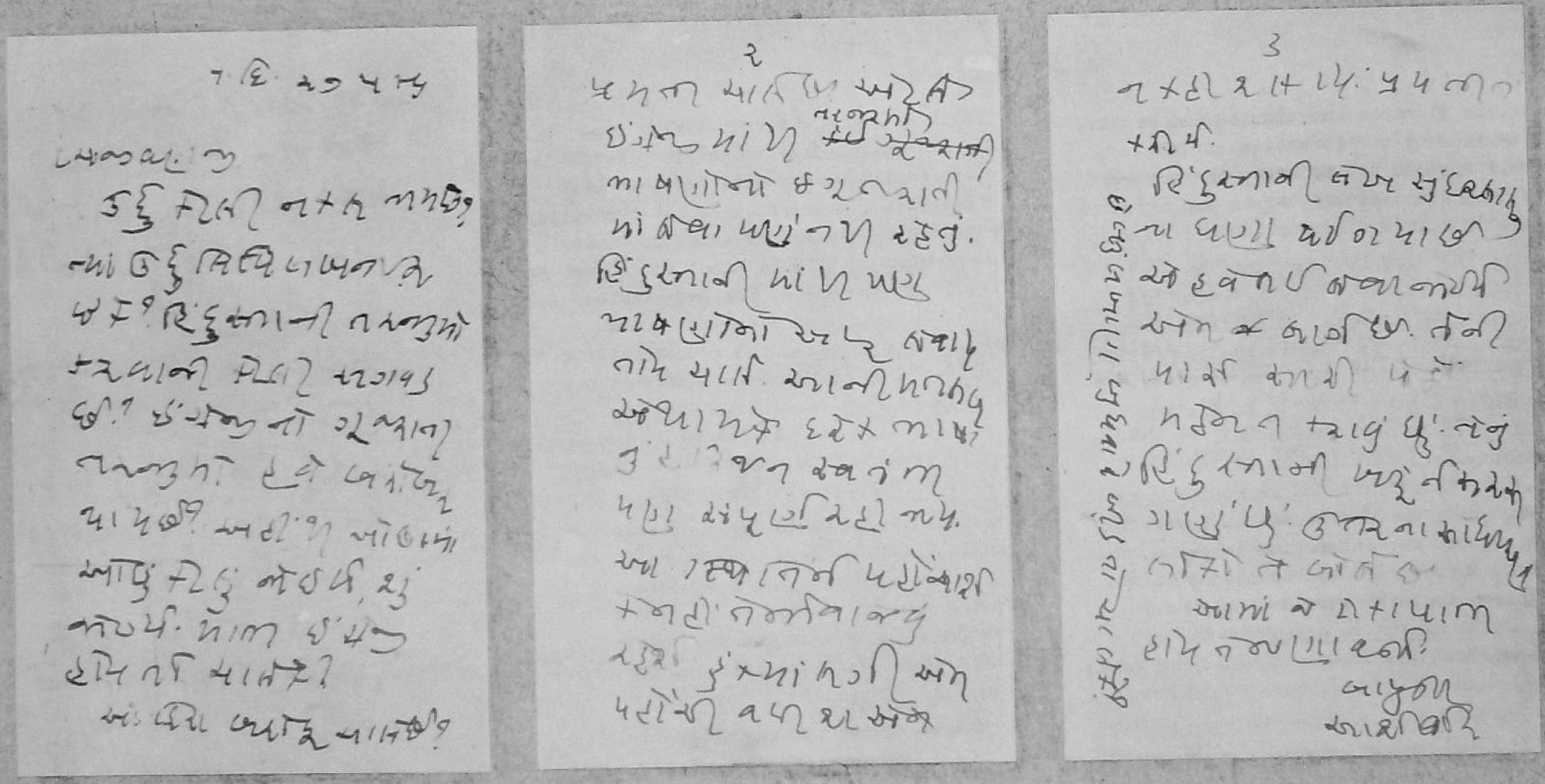
भाई भागवत

आपका स्कूल ठीक ठीक चल रहा है। मेरा यहांसे छूटना कब होगा कुछ पता नहीं देखता हूं क्या होता है।

'प्रासंगिक' क्यों? 'प्रसंग' काफी नहीं है? 'प्रासंगिक' संस्कृत शब्द है कि मराठीमें ही जिसका उपयोग होता है?

बापुके
आशीर्वाद

Gandhi's letter to Mr. Bhagwat, dated New Delhi, May 23, 1946



Courtesy : Jivanji D. Desai

Gandhi's letter to Jivanji Desai regarding the Harijan weeklies, dated New Delhi, May 27, 1946

'die for your honour and freedom' instead of 'kill, if necessary, and be killed in the act'. What does a brave soldier do? He kills only if necessary and risks his own life in the act. Non-violence demands greater courage and sacrifice. Why should it be comparatively easy for a person to risk death in the act of killing, and almost superhuman for him to do so in the act of sparing life? It seems to be a gross self-deception to think that we can risk death, if we learn and practise the art of killing, but cannot do so otherwise. But for the hypnotism induced by the repetition of an untruth, we should not grossly deceive ourselves.

"But the critic or the scoffer will ask, why bring in prayer, if the matter is so simple, as you have put it. The answer is that prayer is the first and the last lesson in learning the noble and brave art of sacrificing self in the various walks of life, culminating in the defence of one's nation's liberty and honour.

"Undoubtedly, prayer requires a living faith in God. Successful satyagraha is inconceivable without that faith. God may be called by any other name, so long as it connotes the living Law of Life—in other words, the Law and the Lawgiver rolled into one."

The 6th and the 13th of April, marking the opening and the close of National Week, were observed in Gandhi's camp by fasting and spinning. Addressing the prayer gathering, he said:

"Today is the last day of the National Week, which I have also called the Sacred Week. It was on this day, that the tragedy of the Jallianwala Bagh was enacted. The 6th of April saw the birth of satyagraha in India. The awakening among the masses resulting from it was so phenomenal, that the Government could suppress it only by having recourse to the method of frightfulness. It culminated in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre when General Dyer with a party of fifty sepoys opened fire on an unarmed and a peaceful gathering, resulting in the death of at least five hundred people and the wounding of thrice that number. There was only one exit, and it was held by the firing party, so that the innocent men and women who were trapped there, had no alternative, but to be shot down like rabbits in a hole. It is true some excesses were committed by the mob, before the massacre. But they were nothing as compared to the savage reprisals taken by the Government. That is the way of all imperialisms. In no other way, could a handful of foreigners maintain their rule over a nation of 400 millions.

"Why have I recalled these incidents? Not to stir up bitter, old memories, or to keep alive the embers of hatred, but only to emphasize the distinction between the old order which they symbolized and the new that is in sight. I have not the slightest doubt as to the bona fides of the Cabinet Mission. I am convinced that they have finally made up their mind to withdraw *in toto*. The question which is exercising their minds is how to effect withdrawal in an orderly manner, and to that end their energies are bent. Gentlemanliness requires that, if a person is sincerely trying to make amends, he should be thanked and congratulated for it, not that his past should be flung in his face.

"You know Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Lohia. Both of them are daring men of action and scholars. They could easily have become rich. But they chose the way of renunciation and service. To break the chains of the country's slavery was their one passion. Naturally, the alien Government regarded them as dangerous to its existence, and put them into prison. We, however, have different scales to weigh merit and we regard them as true patriots, who have sacrificed their all for the love of the country, which has given them birth. That they would be found wanting in the scales of non-violence is irrelevant today. What is relevant is that independence of India is today the common ground between the British and ourselves. Their freedom, therefore, is no longer considered dangerous by the Government. Viewed in that light, their release, as also the release of the I.N.A. men, yesterday, must be regarded as an earnest of the honesty of the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy. We must be thankful to them for this earnest and a prayer of thankfulness should ascend to heaven for the wisdom with which God seems to be endowing them.

"The National Week, which is closing today, is devoted always to communal unity and khaddar. Communal unity is not confined to the Hindus and Muslims only, it extends to all, including Englishmen. It must not become a menace to anybody or group. That is the message of non-violence.

"The National Week is a week of self-introspection and prayer. Prayer is not for the impure in heart."

New Delhi was much in news these days. Since the arrival of the Cabinet Mission consisting of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Albert Alexander, the press correspondents had been

cabling every bit of news to Britain, United States, France, China, South Africa, Australia, the Middle East and the U.S.S.R. For the newspapermen, Gandhi remained the star turn: when he first met the Cabinet Mission, 82,000 words were sent. The peak day for the overseas despatches was April 1, which marked the mission's first meeting with political leaders. The Cabinet Mission had no concrete proposals to place before the leaders. The talks were, therefore, of a general and exploratory nature.

The labours of the Cabinet Mission were proceeding against an ominous background. The capital had for the last few days become a seething cauldron of rumours. The air was thick with alarms and threats of communal rioting. Deprecating this tendency, Gandhi said at a prayer meeting:

"The newspaperman has become a walking plague. In the East as in the West, newspapers are fast becoming the people's Bible, the Koran, Zend-Avesta and the Gita, rolled into one. All that appears in the papers is looked upon as God's truth. For instance, a newspaper predicts that riots are coming, that all the sticks and knives in Delhi have been sold out, and the news throws everybody into a panic. That is bad. Another newspaper reports the occurrence of riots here and there, and blames the police with taking sides with the Hindus in one place, and the Muslims in another. Again, the man in the street is upset. I want you all to shed this craven fear. It is not becoming of men and women, who believe in God and take part in the prayers, to be afraid of anyone.

"What if riots do actually take place and some people get killed? Everyone must die one day. I will expect you to go in the midst of the fracas and tell the rowdies to be sensible. A friend remarked, in the course of the conversation, the other day, that whilst it is poor rowdies that kill and get killed in riots, the real responsibility lies not with them, but with educated people, some of them occupying respectable places in society. It is they who incite others to violence from behind the scenes. It is for these educated and cultured people to stop the riots by laying down their lives in the process, if necessary. Even a little girl can go up to the hooligans and can tell them to desist. Most probably, they will. But supposing they do not and kill her, it will be well with her all the same. She will live through her pure sacrifice. It is always well with those who believe in God and try to do His will to the best of their ability.

"Independence is coming," he concluded. "But our lungs appear to have lost the capacity to breathe the air of freedom. But when freedom actually comes, you will find that the loss of capacity was only too apparent. May be, the first impact of freedom will give you a rude shock, and before you regain your equilibrium, some undesirable things might take place. All that you need to do is to keep yourselves on the alert and undaunted, and it will be well with you in the end."

"Where shall we stand when India is independent?" inquired a landlords' representative.

"You will be as free as any scavenger," said Gandhi, "but then whether you will be able to retain all the privileges which you are enjoying under the British Government is a question you can answer for yourself."

"We realize that we shall secure our salvation at the hands of the Indian leaders, not the British Government."

"Everybody believes that today," said Gandhi. "Even the British Government feel that they cannot do otherwise than to leave India to settle her own affairs."

"The landholders derived their charter of rights and privileges from the Permanent Settlement of 1802, which was of the nature of a contract between the British and the zamindars, but they are willing to negotiate an agreement with the leaders of the country on the future of their rights."

"Being a non-violent man by nature," affirmed Gandhi, "I cannot countenance the usurpation of anybody's just rights. But some of the extraordinary privileges that pass muster under the British rule are themselves in the nature of an usurpation. The history of British rule is a history of usurpation. Those who helped the British Government in this process got certain rights as a reward for their services. These cannot be insisted upon."

The landlord rejoined: "Many ancient zamindaris existed long before the advent of the British and were exercising sovereign power as a product of indigenous social and economic system of long standing. Don't you think that they have a title to continue their existence? They are trying their best to discharge a philanthropic function in the shape of founding educational and social institutions."

"Anything that is ancient and consistent with the moral values has a title to be retained," said Gandhi. "*Per contra*, anything that does

not conform to the moral values has to go. Wrong has no prescriptive right to exist, merely because it is of a long standing. If those who are on your zamindaris feel one with you and you with them, like members of a family, you have nothing to fear from anybody."

"We want even-handed justice," said the landlord. "We have no objection to an independent India Government abolishing all sorts of vested interests. But let there be no special discrimination against the zamindars. We only want a conciliatory gesture, as assurance that you won't wipe us out as a class, without giving us a sporting chance to vindicate our existence."

"A just man," said Gandhi, "need have no fear of any kind from an independent India. India may, however, fall into unjust hands. Every Congressman is not an angel, nor is everyone, who is not a Congressman, a devil. Let us hope that, if the Congress comes into power, it will try to be more than just. Otherwise, all the good that it might have done would disappear in the twinkling of an eye."

Another group of visitors presented Gandhi with a poser: "Will you guarantee that under independence the right of proselytization would be guaranteed by a statute?" This provoked a counter question, "Do you really believe in the ideal of independence ideal, only for a consideration?" In the latter case, he would say that they believed neither in independence nor in religion. Who could suppress the voice of truth, if it filled one's being? And of what avail was a statutory guarantee, if there was not the fire within to bear witness to truth?

"It is true no one can suppress the voice of truth," interpolated one of them. "But we want a guarantee from you that no attempt would be made to suppress it."

"I can't give you that guarantee, because I have no authority," replied Gandhi. It was the function of religion to save the temporal power from losing its soul; religion did not depend upon it for protection. And he cited to them the illustration of Daniel, who used to pray behind the closed doors. But when Darius the King issued a decree prohibiting the worship of any God or man, save himself, under a penalty, he began to pray to God publicly, the windows of his chamber being open, so that all could see him praying. Daniel was thrown into the hungry lion's den, but he came out unscathed. The result was that the king rescinded his former decree, which was "unalterable" under the laws of the Medes and the Persians and he

made another decree to the effect that in every dominion of his kingdom, "men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God and steadfast as ever." And "so Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus". That was the only true way of proselytization, and it needed no guarantee, statutory or otherwise. It was its own seal and sanction. "To take a leaf from the history of our own times, remember the words of the late Lord Salisbury who, when in office, had said to a missionary deputation about China that they were a poor specimen, if for their mission they sought the protection of British guns," concluded Gandhi.

A number of students and some members of the staff from Jamia Millia came and requested him to pay a visit, some time, to their institution. "Some time must mean now," replied Gandhi. "Having come so far, I cannot go back without going to you."

The unexpected visit put the whole place in a flutter of excitement. "I have proved my claim to being a member of the family by coming without any previous notice," Gandhi remarked and then invited questions.

A student asked, "What can the students do to bring about the Hindu-Muslim unity?"

"The way is simple," he said. "Even if all Hindus turn rowdies and abuse you, you may not cease to regard them as your blood brothers and vice versa. Is it impossible? No, rather the contrary. And what is possible for the individual is possible for the mass.

"Today, the whole atmosphere is poisoned. All manner of wild rumours are circulated by the press and they are indiscriminately swallowed by the people. Panic results and both the Hindus and the Muslims forget their humanity and behave towards one another like the wild brutes. It behoves man to act decently, irrespective of what the other party might or might not do. If one returns decency for decency, it is a bargain. Even thieves and dacoits do that. There is no merit in it. Humanity disdains to calculate profits and losses. It enjoins on one a unilateral obligation to put up decent behaviour. If all the Hindus listened to my advice, or, in the alternative, all the Muslims listened to me, there would be peace in India, which neither the daggers nor lathis would be able to shatter. The mischief-maker will soon be weary of the sorry business of stabbing, when there is no retaliation or counter provocation. An Unseen Power will arrest his uplifted arm, and it will refuse to obey his wicked will.

You may throw dust at the sun, it won't dim his lustre. All it needs is to hold one's soul in faith and patience. God is good and does not allow wickedness to proceed beyond a certain length.

"I had a hand in the building up of this institution. It, therefore, gives me much pleasure to be able to pour out my heart before you. I have said the same thing to the Hindus. May yours be a shining example to India and the world."

On the morning of April 18, he received the news of Srinivasa Sastri's death. He wrote: "Death has removed not only from us, but from the world, one of India's best sons. That he loved India passionately, every one who knew him could see. When I saw him last in Madras, he could talk of nothing but India and her culture for which he lived and died. I am sure that he had no thought of himself, even when he seemed to be on his death-bed. His Sanskrit learning was as great, if not greater than, his English. I must not permit myself to say more, save this, that though we differed in politics, our hearts were one and I could never think that his patriotism was less than that of the tallest patriot. Sastri the man lives, though his body is reduced to ashes."

The fever of excitement which the yellow press had been trying to work up for some time past reached its culmination, when one Hindu boy in New Delhi was stabbed in the back, in a dastardly manner, by some unknown person. Fortunately, the assault did not prove fatal. Thanks to the sense shown by the people of the locality, there were no reprisals taken and the trouble did not spread. "It might be presumed at the first flush," said Gandhi, "that because the victim in this case was a Hindu boy, the assailant must be a Muslim and vice versa. Such speculation, in my opinion, is not only idle but mischievous. We should rather ask ourselves, as to how we would have or we should have acted, if we were present on the scene." To remain passive witnesses of the dastardly attack would be cowardly. Should they, then, whip out a knife and pay back the miscreant in his own coin? Both these courses would be wrong. The only becoming course, he told them, would be to plead with the miscreant not to dye his hand with innocent blood. If in doing so they themselves became victims of the miscreant's anger, they should not mind, but should rather welcome it. Such an occasion should provide them with an opportunity to test the sincerity of their daily attendance at the prayer meetings.

*Harijan* hardly referred to the Cabinet Mission and continued to deal with the other topics. Commenting on "Capitalism and Strike", Gandhi wrote:

"How should capital behave, when labour strikes? This question is in the air and has great importance at the present moment. One way is that of suppression, named or nicknamed American. It consists in the suppression of the labour through organized goondaism. Everybody would consider this as wrong and destructive. The other way, right and honourable, consists in considering every strike on its merits and giving labour its due—not what capital considers as due, but what labour itself would so consider and the enlightened public opinion acclaim as just.

"One preliminary question will justly arise: Why should there be a strike at all in any well-regulated concern? The strikes ought to be impossible, when there is perfect understanding between capital and labour, mutual respect and recognition of equality. And since differences there would be sometimes between employers and employed, even in the best-regulated concerns, why should there not be a system of arbitration between the parties, so that they will always readily carry out in perfect good faith awards of arbitrators?

"But we have to consider the things not as they should be, but as they are. As time progresses, the labour world is getting more insistent in its demands, which are daily increasing, and it does not hesitate to resort to violence in its impatient enforcement of those demands. New methods of enforcing them are being employed. The workers do not hesitate to injure the property of the employers, dislocate machinery, harass old men and women, who would not join the strike, and forcibly keep out blacklegs. In these circumstances, how are the employers to behave?

"In my opinion, the employers and employed are equal partners, even if the employees are not considered superior. But what we see today is the reverse. The reason is that the employers harness intelligence on their side. They have the superior advantage, which concentration of capital brings with it, and they know how to make use of it. One individual rupee has very little potency, but when money combines as capital, the combine derives a power different from and far in excess of the mere sum-total of the individual rupees. A million drops individually are negligible. But in combination, they make ocean, carrying on its bosom a fleet of ocean hounds. Whilst

capital in India is fairly organized, labour is still in a more or less disorganized condition, in spite of the unions and their federation. Therefore, it lacks the power that true combination gives.

"Moreover, it lacks intelligence, so much so that the individuals fight against individuals, the unions against unions. Its lack of intelligence leads to its exploitation by the selfish and unscrupulous men even to the point of creating and promoting mischief. They know no better, being ignorant of the secret of non-violence. The net result is that the workers suffer. If the labour were to understand the working of non-violence, the power generated by the combination would any day exceed the power or the dead metal in the hands of a few capitalists.

"Hence, my advice to the employers would be that they should willingly regard workers as the real owners of the concerns, which they fancy they have created. The employers should further regard it as their duty to equip the employees with sound education that would draw out the intelligence, dormant in them, and they should gladly promote and welcome the power that this combination of the workers gives them.

"But this noble work cannot be done in a day by the employers. Meanwhile, what should those do, who have to face the destruction wrought by the strikers in their concerns? I would unhesitatingly advise such employers, that they should at once offer the strikers the full control of the concern, which is as much the strikers' as theirs. They will vacate their premises not in a huff, but because it is right, and to show their goodwill, they would offer employees the assistance of the engineers and other skilled staff. Employers will find in the end, that they will lose nothing. Their right action will disarm opposition, and they will earn the blessings of their men. They will have made proper use of their capital. I would not consider such action as benevolent. It would be an intelligent use by capitalists of their resources, and honest dealing in regard to employees, whom they would have converted into honourable partners."

In a subsequent editorial, he wrote on "Sweepers' Strike":

"There are certain matters in which strikes would be wrong. The sweepers' grievances come in this category. I do not want to go into others here. My opinion against the sweepers' strikes dates back to 1897, when I was in Durban. A general strike was mooted there and the question arose, as to whether the scavengers should join in it.

My vote was registered against the proposal. Just as man cannot live without air, so too he cannot exist for long, if his home and his surroundings are not clean. One or other epidemic is bound to break out, especially, when modern drainage is put out of action.

"Therefore, I was perturbed, when I read about the sweepers' strike in Bombay. Fortunately, it has come to an end. I understand, however, that the sweepers, both men and women, refused to submit their case to arbitration.

"In spite of my close attachment to sweepers, better because of it, I must denounce the coercive methods, they are said to have employed. They will thereby be losers in the long run. City folk will not always be cowed down. If they were, it would mean the collapse of the municipal administration. Coercion cannot but result in the end in chaos. An impartial tribunal for settling the disputes should always be accepted. Refusal is a sign of weakness. A bhangi may not give up his work, even for a day. And there are many other ways open to him of securing justice.

"Townspeople should, on the other hand, forget that that there is such a thing as untouchability and learn the art of cleaning their own and the city's drains, so that, if a similar occasion arises, they are not non-plussed and they can render the necessary temporary service. They may not be coerced. And I go so far as to say that the military, who know this work, should be used for such emergency. If swaraj is round the bend, we can look upon the military as ours and need have no hesitation in taking all the constructive work, we can, from them. Up till now, they have only been employed in indiscriminate firing on us. Today, they must plough land, dig wells, clean latrines, and do every other constructive work that they can, and thus turn the people's hatred of them into love.

"Now that the hartal is at an end, it is the duty of everyone to stretch out the hand of fellowship to the bhangis, educate them, see that the bhangis are properly housed, permit them, like anyone else, to live wherever they choose, look in the matter of an equitable wage for them, and see that justice is meted out to the bhangis, without their having to demand it. If this is done throughout India, we shall definitely prove ourselves worthy of swaraj, and be able also to maintain it."

The Working Committee met in Delhi from April 12 to April 18 and from April 25 to April 30 to discuss the terms with the Cabinet

Mission with regard to the setting up of a constituent assembly and establishment of provisional national government. The negotiations had not yet come to an end and the next venue for further talks was fixed at Simla.

"Do you think we are getting off your backs at last?" asked an English visitor.

Gandhi replied: "I have no doubt, as to the sincerity of your intention. The question is whether you will have the strength and the courage needed for it. It is so difficult to get out of conventional grooves of thought and action."

"We must not precipitate a solution," resumed the visitor. "We must let India decide for herself. But, at the same time, one does not want to leave the country to chaos, when an unprecedented famine threatens it."

"Your difficulty," remarked Gandhi, "will remain, so long as you retain the belief that your rule has benefited India. None of us believes it."

"One or two have testified to the contrary," rejoined the visitor.

"That is neither here nor there," replied Gandhi. "I too believed it once. Such benefit, as has really accrued to India, is not part of foreign rule, but is the result of contact with a robust people. The good is incidental, the evil of foreign rule is inherent and far outweighs the good. Communal divisions in India can be demonstrably proved to be a British creation. Even famine, as we know it today, is your creation."

"Mark the true meaning of my words," he added. "Famines may be said to be godsend. But a well-equipped country should be able to pull through a deficiency period, and not helplessly succumb. Famines in India, today, are not due to rain or lack of it merely, but due to the fact that India is ill equipped to tide over the dry periods. Nothing has been done to safeguard her population against the threat of recurring famines. Take South Africa. There they fight against locusts, draught, etc., manfully and with infinite resourcefulness. Here famine is simply blamed on the rain gods, and there is nothing to be done for it."

"Would India have been better equipped, if Britain had not been here?" asked the visitor.

"Yes," said Gandhi. "There would have been no railways. And if there were no railways, etc., we would be living in a natural state,

as they used to in England and Europe in the Middle Ages, when every feudal baron had his castle with its stocks of grain and water. Before the advent of railways in India, every village had its granary. In that sense, we were better equipped. Moreover, we had our own system of domestic crafts to fall back upon, if the crops failed. Now the railways have depleted the countryside of its stocks and killed the handicrafts. Whatever cash the cultivator gets in return for his produce runs through his fingers like water, thanks to the invasion of his economy by the revenue collector and the imported foreign goods, without which, he thinks, he can no longer do. The Britishers have told him: 'Do not stock grain, do not hoard silver.' There is no provision made for a deficit period. The railways have become a snare, and cheap transport a trap. The princes practised tyranny in the olden times too. But it could not go far. The natural means of redress, namely, insurrection, retreat or migration, were still open to the people. They were not then disarmed or emasculated. Odds were even. Today the odds are so heavy, that a handful of British soldiers can terrorize millions. That is what the British rule has done to us. It is most demoralizing. The British must realize this and leave us in an exemplary manner. If the virus has gone so deep, that it cannot be cured without applying a strong blister, even then they must go. A few lakhs might be killed in the internecine warfare, but real peace will come at last. If I could persuade India to adopt the way of non-violence, it would be settled in two days. Otherwise, the ordeal might last longer. Even so, the destruction will not be anything like the destruction wrought by the foreign rule. India would have then something to live for and die for. Today, what has she to live and die for?"

"But it is a big responsibility to leave India faced with anarchy!" exclaimed the visitor.

"Not a bigger responsibility than you were prepared to face during the war out of strategic considerations," said Gandhi.

On April 29, Gandhi wrote an editorial on "Independence":

"Friends have repeatedly challenged me to define independence. At the risk of repetition, I must say that independence of my dream means Ram Raj, that is, the Kingdom of God, on earth. I do not know what it will be like in heaven. I have no desire to know the distant scene. If the present is attractive enough, the future cannot be very unlike.

"In concrete terms, then, the independence should be political, economic and moral.

" 'Political', necessarily, means the removal of the control of the British army in every shape and form.

" 'Economic' means entire freedom from the British capitalists and capital, as also their Indian counterpart. In other words, the humblest must feel equal to the tallest. This can take place only by capital or the capitalists sharing their skill and their capital with the lowliest and the least.

" 'Moral' means freedom from the armed defence forces. My conception of Ram Raj excludes replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation. A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free and, therefore, its so-called weakest member can never rise to his full moral height.

"If the Cabinet Mission 'delivers the goods', India will have to decide whether, attempting to become a military power, she would be content to become, at least for some years, a fifth-rate power in the world without a message, or whether she will by further refining and continuing her non-violent policy prove herself worthy of being the first nation in the world, using her hard-won freedom for the delivery of the earth from the burden which is crushing her in spite of the so-called victory."

## *Second Simla Conference*

1946

On April 27, 1946, Maulana Azad, the Congress President, received the following letter from Lord Pethick-Lawrence:

"The Cabinet Mission and His Excellency the Viceroy have come to the conclusion that they should make one further attempt to obtain an agreement between the Muslim League and the Congress. They realize that it would be useless to ask the two parties to meet, unless they were able to place before them a basis of negotiation which could lead to such an agreement.

"I am, therefore, asked to invite the Muslim League to send four negotiators to meet the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy together with a similar number from the Congress Working Committee with a view to discussing the possibility of an agreement upon a scheme based upon the following fundamental principles.

"The future constitutional structure of the British India to be as follows: A Union Government dealing with the following subjects: Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. There will be two groups of provinces, the one of the predominantly Hindu provinces and the other of the predominantly Muslim provinces, dealing with all the other subjects which the provinces in the respective groups desire to be dealt with in common. The provincial governments will deal with all the other subjects and they will have all the residuary sovereign rights.

"It is contemplated that the Indian states will take their appropriate place in this structure on terms to be negotiated with them."

In course of a reply, Maulana Azad wrote on April 28:

"As you are aware, we have envisaged a Federal Union of the autonomous units. And such a Federal Union must of necessity deal with certain essential subjects of which the defence and its allied subjects are the most important. It must be organic and must have both an executive and legislative machinery, as well as the finance

relating to these subjects, and the power to raise revenues for these purposes in its own right. Without these functions and powers, it would be weak and disjointed, and defence and progress in general would suffer. Thus, among the common subjects, in addition to the Foreign Affairs and Defence and Communications, there should be the Currency, Customs, Tariffs and such other subjects, as may be found on close scrutiny to be intimately allied to them.

"Your reference to two groups of provinces, the one of the predominantly Hindu provinces and the other of the predominantly Muslim provinces, is not clear. The only predominantly Muslim provinces are the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan. Bengal and the Punjab have a bare Muslim majority. We consider it wrong to form groups of provinces under the Federal Union and more so, on the religious or communal basis. It also appears that you leave no choice to a province in the matter of joining or not joining a group. It is by no means certain that a province as constituted, would like to join any particular group. In any event, it would be wholly wrong to compel a province to function against its own wish. While we agree to the provinces having full powers, in regard to all remaining subjects, as well as, the residuary powers, we have also stated that it should be open to any province to exercise its option to have more common subjects with the Federal Union. Any sub-federation within the Federal Union would weaken the federal centre and would be otherwise wrong. We do not, therefore, favour any such development.

"Regarding the Indian states, we should like to make it clear that we consider it essential that the Indian states should be parts of the Federal Union in regard to the common subjects mentioned above. The manner of their coming into the Union can be considered fully at the later stage.

"You have referred to certain 'fundamental principles', but there is no mention of the basic issue before us, that is, the Indian independence and the consequent withdrawal of the British army from India. It is only on this basis that we can discuss the future of India, or any interim arrangement.

"While we are ready to carry on negotiations with any party, as to the future of India, we must state our conviction that reality will be absent from any negotiations, whilst an outside ruling power still exists in India."

The four Congress representatives, Azad, Nehru, Ghaffar Khan and Sardar Patel, moved up to Simla on May 1, to participate in the proposed conference. At the request of the Working Committee and the Cabinet Mission, Gandhi too proceeded there. On the day of his arrival, May 2, he said in his prayer speech:

"I did not know that I would have to come to Simla this time. If we have faith in God, we simply would not care to know beforehand how He may dispose of us. It is enough for us to hold ourselves perfectly in readiness for whatever happens. We are not allowed to know what tomorrow has in store for us, and our best conceived plans have a knack very often of going awry. The highest wisdom, therefore, is never to worry about the future, but to resign ourselves entirely to His Will.

"I don't propose to say anything here about the Cabinet Mission. And I would want you too, on your part, to repress your curiosity about it. Let us all mutely watch and pray. The Cabinet Mission will not be able to go beyond what is warranted by our strength. We shall be fools to think otherwise. Even if they tried to go beyond, it would only cause us surfeit, and we would not be able to take advantage of it. Therefore, even if the mission should prove infructuous, I would not blame them for it. Rather I would blame ourselves for our weakness. It would give us a measure of our strength. By strength, I mean non-violent strength. We are pledged to gain swaraj non-violently.

"Many people today share the belief, and I am one of them, that this time the Cabinet Mission will do the right thing by India and that the British power would finally and completely be withdrawn. Time alone will show how far this belief is justified.

"Now to take up the question I want to talk to you about. The first mantra of *Ishopanishad* says that it is man's duty to surrender his all to God, in the first instance. There is nothing which he can call his own. Having made the surrender, man is to take out of it what he may require for his legitimate needs, but not a jot more. He must not covet what belongs to the others. Take my instance. I have been housed here in a palatial building. For fear of your embarrassing affection, I had to seek the Government's hospitality and they put me up here. That, however, does not mean that, since the Government have placed a big bungalow at my disposal, I am free to make use of the whole of it. Tolstoy, in one of his inimitable

parables, has answered the question, how much land a man requires. The Devil tempts a man by granting him a boon, that all the land that he can circumscribe by running around shall be his. The man runs and runs, goaded by his greed and, in the end, when the sun is just sinking below the horizon, the man reaches back the starting-point, only to drop down dead. Six feet of the earth is all the land that he requires for his burial. If, therefore, I were to delude myself with the belief that I needed the whole of this bungalow and took possession of it, I would be set down as a fool. A perverse nature only can interpret the verse to mean that after making a ceremony of offering everything to God, one can indulge oneself in the good things of life to an unlimited extent. That would be a travesty of its true meaning. I would far rather like to see a man dressed in old, mended clothes, than in gaudy new ones. To wear torn clothes is a sign of laziness and, therefore, of shame, but to wear patched clothes proclaims poverty, or renunciation, and industry. Similarly, if someone gives me Rs. 25,000 and I spend it on my person, I am a robber and thief. I can use only enough for my bare needs. That would be the teaching of *Ishopanishad.*"

Within forty-eight hours of his arrival in Simla, Gandhi decided to send back his party to Delhi. "We are put up against the heavy odds," he said. "There is so much corruption, falsehood and deceit all around. How can I cut my way through it and come out of it unscathed, except by the use of the sharp axe of detachment? In this hour of trial, I wish to put myself entirely in God's hands."

Speaking to an English friend, Gandhi said: "The world will laugh at me and say: 'Here is a theatrical man.' I do not mind it. When one is used to human aids, it is not easy to tear oneself away from them, all of a sudden. I am very conservative in my feelings. I have spent half a day in searching for a small bit of pencil, which had been with me for a long time. I could not reconcile myself to its loss. And here, I have to detach myself from my entire surroundings and send away a party, whom I have trained and seasoned for my work for years—no easy job.

"It should not be so. All should be same to one, who had surrendered his all to God. My Ramanam will be vain repetition and I would be a wretched guide for the Congress, Cabinet Mission and others, if I allowed that feeling of attachment to weigh with me. If they follow my advice, it might be like a plunge in darkness. As

seasoned politicians, they cannot afford to take that risk. My guidance must, therefore, be unalloyed.

"If you are surrounded by your family, they divide your attention in however small, or subtle, a measure. I wish in this crisis to give my undivided self to God."

"You feel you have to deal with an extraordinarily acute crisis?" asked the visitor.

"Yes, there is a crisis within a crisis," he said. "Not only is there the outward crisis, which you see, but a crisis within myself."

"It remains to be seen, how I come out of the test," he continued. "So far, people around me had attended to every little thing for me. If anything went wrong, they were responsible. From tomorrow, I shall have to do all that myself and blame myself only, if anything goes wrong. With all that I must feel at ease with myself. I shall have to watch myself. It will be a great thing, if I can survive that detachment and feel the inner joy—not start running high blood pressure. It is a big experiment in my life, and a necessary stage in my spiritual growth."

His party having left Simla, Gandhi issued the following statement on May 4:

"The reason is purely moral, if it may not be described as spiritual. My task as a self-appointed adviser to all the parties concerned is the most delicate at the present moment. The Simla venue was declared all of a sudden. It dawned on me that, if I was to proceed to Simla, I must go without the usual party, even though *Harijan* work might suffer. Had I succeeded in carrying conviction to the members of my party, they would have remained behind in Delhi. The time within which the decision was to be taken was only a few hours on the 1st instant. They were anxious for my well-being. The whole moral purpose would be defeated, if I did not carry their mind with me. They, therefore, came to Simla. But the matter was still agitating me. So I conferred with Pyarelal yesterday. He felt convinced that I should be left free to put myself solely in God's keeping, if I was to work under as much detachment, as was possible for me. The best part of the afternoon was devoted to a prayerful discussion that the party should go back to the heat of Delhi and await me there to rejoin me when I descended."

Gandhi's statement did not satisfy the people. He explained to the audience at the prayer meeting how his permanent staff had shortly

before left for Delhi with smiling faces and his blessings. His task was very hard. But all the difficulties could be overcome by leaning on God. Ever since he had reached the years of discretion, he had felt that God was always with those who waited on Him. "In reality," he said, "He is everywhere, but because He is formless and invisible, man cannot always sense His presence. But if we have listening ears, God speaks to us in our own language, whatever that language be." Badshah Khan had just explained what prayer meant. God was all powerful. Man lived at His will. It was because he (Gandhi) wanted in these crucial days to rely solely on His help, that he had asked his party to leave him to God. Yet he was not quite without human help. He had the fakir Badshah Khan with him, the Sardar and a few others.

Referring to the work in Simla, Gandhi said that it was hard for everyone of the three parties—perhaps, the hardest for the Cabinet Mission. They had vowed to let go their hold on India. He trusted their word. He would advise all to do likewise. It was undignified to be suspicious. The deceiver ever lost. He warned the people not to believe that Great Britain was crumbling. She was a great power. The shame for us was that a handful of them had ruled over us for so long, and the greater shame for them was that they had held dominion over us. But if all were true and all relied on God, no one need have any fear for the future.

He reverted to his previous day's theme in his prayer discourse on May 7th. Strange rumours had come to him, he said, in regard to his permanent staff having left. Some people were foolish enough to believe that there had been some domestic quarrel. The others imagined that because his staff had left, the negotiations had broken down. This too was wholly untrue.

He made a scathing denunciation of the speculation fever, which had seized Simla, and interpreted it as a sign of cowardice. He tried to impress upon them that it arose from fear. He himself was a coward in his early youth. But he had learnt to shed his cowardice through the recitation of Ramanam. It was the cowards who died many times before their death. Fear of disease killed more men than disease itself. He appealed to the newspapermen also not to spread false news. It was their duty to teach the people to be brave and not instil fear into them. The Cabinet Mission had come with the blessings of the Prime Minister, who had said they were coming here

to part with power, whether the Indians agreed among themselves or not. It was not right to distrust or disbelieve anyone, so long as there was no cause to do so. Were those who had had the courage to put up a non-violent fight against a mighty empire for twenty-five years going to yield to frustration, if the British Government failed to perform their duty today?

On Tagore's birthday, which fell on May 8, a picture of the poet had been placed on the dais at the prayer meeting. Drawing the attention of the people to it, Gandhi said that the inscription under it was the motto: "The light that never failed." Gurudev's body, he stated, was reduced to ashes, but the radiance that had been within him was like the sun which would shine, so long as life on this earth lasted. But the light he shed was for the soul, as the sun's was for the body. He was a poet and a literary star of the first magnitude. He wrote in his mother tongue and all Bengal was able to drink deep at the fountain of his poetry. Translations of his works existed in many languages. He was a great writer in English too, perhaps almost without knowing it. He had school education, but he could boast of no university degree. He was just Gurudev. One Viceroy had called him the poet of Asia, a title that no one before him had had. He was also a world poet and, what is more, a *rishi*. Gurudev has left us the *Gitanjali*, the poems which brought him world fame. The great Tulsidas left us his immortal Ramayana. The renowned Vyasa left us a history of the mankind. They were not mere poets, they were teachers. Gurudev too wrote not only as a poet, but as a *rishi*. Writing, however, was not his only gift. He was an artist, a dancer and a singer with all the sweetness and the purity that art in its finest sense should contain. And his creative genius has also given us Santiniketan, Sriniketan and Visva-Bharati. They all breathe his spirit and are a legacy not only to Bengal but to India. Santiniketan has become, as it were, a place of pilgrimage to us all. He was not, in his own lifetime, able to make of these institutions what he had dreamed for them. What man can? Fulfilment of man's purpose is in God's hands. But they are monuments to his endeavour and are a constant reminder to us of his passionate love for his country and the service he rendered to her. They had just heard the national song he wrote, a song which has found a place in our national life. How often is the inspiring refrain heard from thousands of voices! It is not only a song, but is also like a devotional hymn.

Gandhi ended by exhorting the people to learn the lesson of love of the country, love of the world and selfless service, from the noble example which Gurudev had left.

Things of the spirit formed the subject of his next two discourses. He told people that the spirit of prayer must abide with them all the twenty-four hours, if it was a heart prayer and not merely from the lips. The real peace of prayer could come to their hearts, only if God entered therein. Then they would be the same outwardly, as they were within. They would be honest and they would harbour no enmity against anyone.

An indication as to the trend of the Simla talks was revealed in Gandhi's prayer speech on May 12. Referring to the spate of the false rumours, that there had been a break-down in the talks, that the Cabinet Mission were returning home without doing anything, and Indian leaders would again return empty-handed, as they did from the Simla conference last time, he said that it was not a conference like the one they had had last year. If he understood the English language correctly, the Cabinet Mission were here to find out how best they could implement their decision to quit, that is, to remove their power from India. And it was their duty, if they could, to try to bring about an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League. The conference was being held for that purpose. If the people were united, no power on earth could have ruled over them, but their tragedy was that they had their differences. But even if the conference failed of its purpose, no one need be disappointed. For, those who have faith in God must be patient and brave. Supposing the people were going to be deceived, they must stand up and face the consequences bravely. He said that he had no reason to believe that the Cabinet Mission was here to deceive them. They were trying to leave in an orderly manner, so that Indians may be able to live in peace. There was no need to worry. Man had to do his duty. God had given him strength and discernment to do so. But results were always in God's hands.

Lest, in their anxiety for their own future, they might forget their duty towards those, whom they had condemned as the lowliest of the low, Gandhi sent Ghaffar Khan to visit and report on the conditions of the sweepers' quarters. The report which Badshah Khan brought him filled him with anger and grief. Gandhi would have loved to go there himself. Unfortunately, he could not now negotiate

hills and, therefore, could not walk so far to see them himself. He thought it a crime to sit in the rickshaws, especially, for able-bodied men. He disliked even a motor-car. He wanted always to use his legs, the means of locomotion that God had given him. On the previous night he walked, but the hill seemed unending. It was impossible for him, much as he would have liked to do so, to live in the Harijan quarters here. He had heard of it before and, what Badshah Khan told him, confirmed it, namely, that the quarters in which they were forced to live were not fit for animals, much less for human beings. Some of them had been to see him in the morning with a long tale of woe. It was the bounden duty of the residents of Simla to look into their grievances and have them redressed.

He had heard too that the khadi bhandar at Simla might have to close down, because the Simla public were too lazy and ununderstanding to spin the requisite quota of yarn. He warned them that he still maintained that swaraj hung on the thread of hand-spun yarn. Even if they got political swaraj, as they were going to, they would never be able to maintain it without khadi, which was the truest symbol of non-violence. If they hoped to maintain swaraj through force, they were hopelessly mistaken. Some one stronger would come and would wrest their freedom from them. It was in the hands of the public in Simla to keep the bhandar going and he hoped they would do so. Punjabi women were the first to offer him yarn in the old days. Let them live up to their reputation. For himself, he would rather lose their money and close down every bhandar, if need be, but swaraj never.

About sixty senior officers of the I.N.A. met Gandhi. They first sang in a chorus the I.N.A. Hindustani adaptation of Tagore's song. He then addressed them a few words in Hindustani:

"Other friends have placed before me the dilemma which, I am told, faces many of you too. The Congress creed is, of course, that of winning swaraj through non-violence and peaceful means but there are many men outside, and even within the Congress, who have begun to doubt, whether that Congress policy has not exhausted its purpose and has not now become effete for the tasks that lie ahead, especially in view of the changed and changing times.

"You, who have served under Subhas Babu as veteran fighters, have proved your mettle on the battlefield. Success and failure are, however, not in our hands, but in God's hands alone. Netaji told

you, when bidding good-bye to you, that, on your return to India, you must put yourself under the Congress discipline and must act according to the Congress policy. Your object, as I have been told, was only to free India, never to help the Japanese. You failed in your direct objective, to defeat the British. But you have the satisfaction that the whole country has been roused, and even the regular forces have been stirred into a new political consciousness and, have begun to think in terms of independence. You have achieved a complete unity among the Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Anglo-Indians and Sikhs in your ranks. That is no mean achievement. What, however, you realized under the conditions of freedom outside India, you have now to sustain and keep alive under the Indian conditions. That will be your real test.

"If you have imbibed the spirit of non-violence, you will remain free men at heart even here. For instance, no government on earth can make men, who have realized freedom in their hearts, salute against their will. If they threaten to kill them, they will offer their necks to them, but refuse to submit. The odds are that a soldier's spirit will revolt against such cold-blooded murder. Thus, whether they live or die, it will be as free men. They will never be slaves. If you all become free men at heart, the whole of India will be free. They might imprison you. You will welcome it, or you can say to them that you will be a corpse, before they can put you into prison. Both the alternatives are open to a non-violent soldier and both call for the bravery of the highest order. Our task is no less than to re-infuse life into the 400 millions of India. We have to dispel fear from their hearts. On the day they shed all fear, India's fetters shall fall and she will be free."

"Years ago, I said at Nankanasaheb: 'Sikhs have given proof of their martial valour. But the consummation of Guru Govind Singh's ideal will be reached only, when they will substitute for their *kirpans* the sword of the spirit or non-violence.' So long as one wants to retain one's sword, one has not attained complete fearlessness. No power on earth can subjugate you, when you are armed with the sword of ahimsa. It ennobles both the victor and the vanquished. Netaji has fired you with a new spirit. That spirit can now be kept alive only through non-violence."

He added: "Above all, you must never beg or throw yourself on anybody's charity. Because you have risked your lives for India's

sake and fought for her on the Imphal plain, you must not expect to be pampered in return. If you do that, you will lose all worth like the salt that has lost its savour. You should prefer to earn your own bread by the sweat of your brow, but refuse to beg or accept charity. In short, you have to show the same degree of bravery and courage of the non-violent type, as you have done in the use of the arms hitherto.

"If you want land, you will have it. You will clear it and turn it into model farms. You have to overcome the inertia of ages, which weighs down our masses. That you will be able to do only by setting an example of industry and hard work. You must be able to wield the bucket and the broom with skill and diligence and not consider the cleaning of latrines as dirty or beneath your dignity. Graduation in this work is more heroic than winning the Victoria Cross."

Then followed questions and answers.

Question: "How can one who has spent his whole life in fighting take to ahimsa with success? Are not the two incompatible?"

Gandhi: "I do not agree. Badshah Khan is a Pathan. But today he has become a soldier of non-violence. Tolstoy too served in the army. And yet, he became the high priest of non-violence in Europe. We have not yet realized fully the power that is in non-violence. If the Government had not arrested me in 1942, I would have shown how to fight Japan by non-violence."

Question: "Surely, it is no breach of ahimsa to use the sword in self-defence?"

Gandhi: "Even Wavell or Auchinleck or Hitler does not use the sword without necessity. But that does not make it ahimsa. It is *himsa,* whatever its justification."

Question: "You cannot take the world along with you, if you adopt ahimsa. You have to choose the one or the other."

Gandhi: "There again I disagree. A reformer has to sail not with the current, often he has to go against it, even though it may cost him his life. You must not be carried off your feet by unthinking, popular applause. The essential part of your message to the country is not how to wield the sword, but to cease to be afraid of it."

Question: "What would you have done, if Subhas Babu had returned to you victorious?"

Gandhi: "I would have asked him to make you put away your weapons and stack them before me."

The Simla conference, having failed to achieve its object, broke up on May 12. The Cabinet Mission, the Viceroy and the Congress and Muslim League leaders moved down to Delhi.

Gandhi was glad to be back in the sweepers' colony. The public prayer was resumed from the very first day of his arrival. Koranic prayer was led by Badshah Khan and he said that all prayer, in whatever language or from whatever religion it was, was prayer addressed to one and the same God and taught mankind that all belonged to one family and should bear love to one another.

Echoing Badshah Khan's word's, Gandhi said it was a travesty of true religion to consider one's own religion as superior and other's as inferior. All religions enjoined worship of the One God who was all pervasive. He was present even in a drop of water, or in a tiny speck of dust. "Even those who worship idols, worship not the stone of which it is made, they try to see God who resides in it." Similarly it was a libel to call the Parsis fire-worshippers or sun-worshippers. The Parsi hymn corresponded to the Gayatri of the Hindus. It was nothing but pure worship of God. The various religions were like the leaves on a tree. No two leaves were alike, and yet there was no antagonism between them, or between the branches on which they grew. Even so, there is an underlying unity in the variety, which we see in God's creation.

Speculation as to the contents of the impending announcement of the Cabinet Mission had reached a feverish height. Friends had been asking, as to what the message was likely to contain. He did not know, nor did he speculate. It was no use giving a thought, as to what it would contain. A man of prayer could not do otherwise. Good or bad, they would know all in another twenty-six hours. It would then be open to them to accept or reject it. Instead of looking outwards, let them search inward and ask God what their duty was in either event. Meanwhile, for him and for them, it should be enough to know that the Cabinet delegation had come all the way, leaving their hearth and home, to find out in what manner British rule was to end and when the last British soldier was to leave India, and not whether or not to leave India. It was necessary for them to find out, whether the Congress and the Muslim League could be brought together. The British rule had separated them, and if the Cabinet Mission failed, it was small wonder. They were bound to come together soon after British hold on India had demonstrably

ceased. The Cabinet delegation's concern was to quit India without a moment's delay. He further added:

"But supposing the reverse happens, they will be the losers, not we. We have chosen the path of self-suffering. We rise through our suffering. That is nature's law. He who clings to his sordid self, or family interests, loses. Man is sent into the world to perform his duty, even at the cost of his life. We must be braced for any suffering that may come in the performance of duty.

"All of us, Hindus and Muslims, constitute an integral whole. If someone errs, all must suffer for it. God has so ordered this world that no one can keep his goodness or badness exclusively to himself. The whole world is like the human body with its various members. Pain in one member is felt in the whole body. Rot in one part must inevitably poison the whole system. Let us cease to think in terms of individuals, and think in terms of the whole country. We must put faith in God and be careful for nothing. We hold our destiny in our own hands, and no one, but ourselves, can make or mar it."

Gandhi's prayer address on the following day, too, was devoted to preparing the people's mind for a dispassionate examination of the forthcoming announcement. He requested the audience not to allow themselves to be led away by prejudice or by hearsay, but to study the document itself carefully and then form their own opinion. He deprecated the habit of borrowing opinions from the newspapers. "The newspapers should be for the study of facts. They should not be allowed to kill the habit of independent thinking." The English language, he warned them, was a very difficult medium to master. Even he, after his residence for nearly twenty years among English-speaking people, could not claim to have full mastery over it. They should, therefore, study the document in Hindustani, to be able to grasp its full meaning. Whether they liked the announcement or not, it was going to be a most momentous one in the history of India and, therefore, deserved careful study.

The Cabinet Mission's announcement was published on May 18. Gandhi's discourse on the following day contained an examination of that document.

Taking as his text the song sung at the meeting, he proceeded to examine the Cabinet Mission's pronouncement in the light of the ideal set forth in that song. How far was the pronouncement calculated to enable them to realize that ideal? The poet says we are

citizens of a country in which there is neither sorrow nor suffering. "Where is such a country to be found in this world?" he asked. "I confess that throughout my wanderings, I have not come across such a country so far. The poet has later described the conditions for the attainment of that ideal state. It is easy to observe them individually. For one who really and truly is pure at heart, there is no sorrow or suffering. But it is a difficult state for the millions to attain. Nevertheless we want India to be such a country."

He had asked them on the previous day to examine independently of other people's opinions the statement of the Cabinet delegation when they saw it. They should examine it from the point of view of a country which would be without sorrow or suffering. He now would give them his own reactions. He did not want to contradict himself by asking them to follow his ideas, if they did not appeal to them. Everyone should think for himself and for herself. They were to weigh opinions and adopt only those they had assimilated.

He had glanced at the document casually on the previous night, as soon as it was received. He had read it carefully in the morning. It was not an award. The delegation and the Viceroy had tried to bring all the parties together, but they could not bring about an agreement. So they had recommended to the country what in their opinion was worthy of acceptance by the constituent assembly. It was open to that body to vary it, reject it or improve upon it. There was no "take it or leave it" business about their recommendations. If there were restrictions, the constituent assembly would not be a sovereign body, free to frame a constitution of independence for India. Thus, the mission had suggested for the Centre certain subjects. It was open to the assembly by the majority vote of Muslims and non-Muslims separately, to add to them or even reduce them. And it was open to the assembly to abolish the distinction, which the mission had felt forced to recognize. Similarly, about the grouping. The provinces were free to reject the very idea of grouping. No province could be forced against its will to belong to a group, even if the idea of grouping was accepted. He instanced only two things to illustrate his point. He had not exhausted the list of things, which seemed to him to be open to objection or improvement.

Subject to the above interpretation, which he held was right, he told them that the mission had brought forth something of which they had every reason to be proud.

There were some, he remarked, who said that the English were incapable of doing the right thing. He did not agree with them. The mission and the Viceroy were as god-fearing, as they themselves claimed to be. It was beneath their dignity as men, to doubt a person, before he was proved to be untrue to his word. Charlie Andrews was every inch of him an Englishman, who had died slaving for India. It would be grievously wrong to doubt in advance every one of his countrymen. Whatever the wrong done to India by British rule, if the statement of the Cabinet Mission was genuine, as he believed it was, it was in discharge of an obligation, which they had declared the British owed to India, namely, to get off India's back. It contained the seed to convert this land of sorrow into one without sorrow and suffering.

Pursuing the theme of the previous day's song, Gandhi asked in his next prayer discourse, how they were to convert India, which was today the home of sorrow and suffering, into the ideal country about which the poet had sung. The reply, he said, was furnished by the song about the sermon of the trees which had just been sung. In that song, one is asked to take the lesson from the trees which themselves suffer the fierce rays of the sun and give shade to those who take shelter under them. To those who throw stones at them, they respond by dropping fruit. That is true philanthropy. To learn that philanthropy, we are asked in that song to go to the Harijans. Today society has condemned Harijans to a life of filth and degradation. That is not their shame, but our shame. Society has treated them as untouchables and condemned them to live in ghettos and yet they continue to render invaluable services to society for a mere pittance. It was open to them to take to more lucrative avocations, as some of them have done. The fact that a vast majority of them have chosen not to, redounds to their credit."

Gandhi had remarked in his previous day's address that he saw the germs of the realization of the ideal envisaged by the poet in the song, that had been sung on that day, in the announcement of the Cabinet Mission. But it was subject to the condition that it meant what it said. He likened that announcement to a promissory note, whose worth depended entirely on its genuineness and its validity. "If the promise inscribed on a promissory note is not honoured, the promissory note is worth nothing and fit only to be torn to pieces and thrown away." Truth meant everything to him. He had said

that he would not purchase even swaraj at the cost of truth, because swaraj so purchased would be illusory. It was his hope and his prayer, in which he invited the audience to join him, that the announcement of the Cabinet Mission would be finally honoured in letter and in spirit, and that God would help the members of the mission to discharge their promissory note, even as He had done for His devotees in days of old.

On Sunday, the 19th, Ghaffar Khan again addressed the prayer gathering. Commenting on it, Gandhi said that, if they had carefully followed and assimilated Badshah Khan's remarks, they would know that the object of prayer was not to please God, who does not want our prayers or praise, but to purify ourselves.

It had pleased him to see so many of them coming to attend the prayers. But he said it would hurt him, if he found that they had come just for fun, or, what would be worse still, to hear his political views. As a rule, politics should not be permitted to intrude upon prayer. He, however, could not avoid referring to current political topics sometimes in the course of his prayer speeches, because life could not be divided into water-tight compartments. The presence of God had to be felt in every walk of life. If they thought that as soon as they left the prayer ground they could live and behave anyhow, their attendance at the prayer was useless. If their interest in the prayer was genuine, the next day's prayer, he hoped, would be as numerously attended, as on the day he spoke, although he would not be speaking on account of his Monday silence.

Out of the depth of his silence and repose, came his written message on May 20: "I only want to say to you that for India it is a day for deep and serious thinking. We should do nothing in haste. For, we are dealing with the destinies of dumb millions. Therefore, it becomes our bounden duty that, with God as witness, we should think only of the country with its forty crores of people, not of our petty selves, nor of our respective communities or groups. Whatever we decide, we should act upon without fear or shame."

A Union of India, embracing both British India and the states, was recommended by the Cabinet Mission as the crux of a solution "just to the essential claims of all the parties" and "most likely to bring about a stable and practicable form of constitution for all India." They rejected the idea of an independent sovereign state of Pakistan, on defence, economic and administrative grounds.

The Indian Union, they proposed, should deal with the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications and it should have powers to raise the finances required for these subjects. It would have an executive and a legislature constituted from the British Indian and the states representatives.

All subjects, other than the Union subjects, and all the residuary powers would vest in the provinces. The states would retain all the subjects and powers, other than those ceded to the Union.

The provinces would be free to form groups with executives and legislatures, and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common. The constitution of the Union and of the groups would contain a provision, whereby any province could, by a majority vote of its legislative assembly, call for reconsideration of the terms of the constitution, after an initial period of ten years and at ten-yearly intervals thereafter.

The Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy said that their object was not to lay out the details of a constitution on these lines, but to set in motion the machinery "whereby a constitution can be settled by Indians for Indians". They, therefore, proposed that an assembly should be formed to meet in New Delhi, as soon as possible.

While the constitution-making proceeded, it was proposed to set up at once an interim government, having the support of the major political parties. The Viceroy had already started discussions to this end and hoped soon to form an interim government, "in which all portfolios, including that of War Member, will be held by Indian leaders having the full confidence of the people."

On May 20, Gandhi wrote an editorial on the state paper:

"After four days of searching examination of the state document issued by the British Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy on behalf of the British Government, my conviction abides that it is the best document the British Government could have produced in the circumstances. It reflects our weakness, if we would be good enough to see it. The Congress and the League did not, could not agree. We would grievously err, if, at this time, we foolishly satisfy ourselves that the differences are a British creation. The mission have not come all the way from England to exploit them. They have come to devise the easiest and the quickest method of ending British rule. We must be brave enough to believe their declaration, until the contrary is proved. Bravery thrives upon the deceit of the deceiver.

"My compliment, however, does not mean that what is best from the British standpoint is also best, or is even good, from the Indian. Their best may possibly be harmful. My meaning will, I hope, be clear from what follows.

"The authors of the document have endeavoured to say fully what they mean. They have gathered from their talks the minimum they thought would bring the parties together for framing India's charter of freedom. Their one purpose is to end British rule, as early as may be. They would do so, if they could, by their effort, leave a united India, not torn asunder by internecine quarrel bordering on civil war. They would leave, in any case. Since in Simla, the two parties, though the mission succeeded in bringing them together at the conference table (with what patience and skill they could do so, they alone could tell), could not come to an agreement, nothing daunted, they descended to the plains of India, and devised a worthy document for the purpose of setting up the constituent assembly, which should frame India's charter of independence, free of any British control or influence. It is an appeal and an advice. It has no compulsion in it. Thus the provincial assemblies may or may not elect the delegates. The delegates, having been elected, may or may not join the constituent assembly. The constituent assembly having met, may lay down a procedure different from the one laid down in the statement. Whatever is binding on any person or party arises out of the necessity of the situation. Separate voting is binding on both the major parties, only because it is necessary for the existence of the assembly and in no otherwise. At the time of writing, I took up the statement, re-read it clause by clause, and came to the conclusion that there was nothing in it binding in law. Honour and necessity alone are the two binding forces.

"What is binding is that part of it, which commits the British Government. Hence, I suppose, the four members of the mission took the precaution of receiving full approval of the British Government and the two Houses of Parliament. The mission are entitled to warm congratulations for the first step in the act of renunciation which the statement is. And since other steps are necessary for full renunciation, I have called this one a promissory note.

"Though the response to be made by India is to be voluntary, the authors have naturally assumed that the Indian parties are well organized and responsible bodies, capable of doing voluntary acts

as fully as, if not more fully than, compulsory acts. Therefore, when Lord Pethick-Lawrence said to a press correspondent, 'If they do come together on that basis, it will mean that they will have accepted that basis, but they can still change it, if by a majority of each party they desire to do so,' he was right in the sense that those who became delegates, well knowing the contents of the statement, were expected by the authors to abide by the basis, unless it was duly altered by the major parties. When two or more rival parties meet together, they do so under some understanding. A self-chosen umpire (in the absence of one chosen by the parties, the authors constitute themselves one) fancies that the parties will come together only if he presents them with a proposal containing a certain minimum, and he makes his proposal, leaving them free to add to, or subtract from, or altogether change it by joint agreement.

"This is perfect so far. But what about the units? Are the Sikhs, for whom the Punjab is the only home in India, to consider themselves against their will, as part of the section which takes in Sind, Baluchistan and the Frontier Province? Or is the Frontier Province, also against its will, belong to the Punjab, called 'B' in the statement, or Assam to 'C', although it is a predominantly non-Muslim province? In my opinion, the voluntary character of the statement demands that the liberty of the individual unit should be unimpaired. Any member of the sections is free to join it. The freedom to opt out is an additional safeguard. It can never be a substitute for the freedom retained in the paragraph 15 (5), which reads thus: 'Provinces should be free to form groups with the executives and legislatures and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common.'

"It is clear that this freedom was not taken away by the authors by section 19 which 'proposes' (does not order) what should be done. It presupposes that the chairman of the constituent assembly, at its first meeting, will ask the delegates of the provinces, whether they would accept the group principle, and if they do, whether they will accept the assignment given to their province. And this freedom inherent in every province and that given by paragraph 15 (5) will remain intact. There appears to me to be no other way of avoiding the apparent conflict between the two paragraphs as also the charge of compulsion which would immediately alter the noble character of the document. I would, therefore, ask all those who are perturbed

by the group proposal and arbitrary assignment, that, if my interpretation is valid, there is not the slightest cause for perturbation.

"There are other things in the document which would puzzle any hasty reader, who forgets that it is simply an appeal and an advice to the nation, showing how to achieve independence in the shortest time possible. The reason is quite clear. In the new world that is going to emerge out of the present chaos, India in bondage will cease to be 'the brightest jewel' in the British Crown, it will become the blackest spot in that crown, so black that it will be fit only for the dustbin. Let me ask the reader to hope and to pray with me that the British Crown has a better use for Britain and for the world. The 'brightest jewel' is an arrogation. When the promissory note is fully honoured, the British Crown will have a unique jewel, as of right flowing from due performance of duty.

"There are other matters outside the statement, which are required to back the promissory note."

Examining the "Vital Defects", he wrote in *Harijan*:

"Intrinsically, and as legally interpreted, the state paper seems to me to be a brave and frank document. Nevertheless, the official interpretation would appear to be different from the popular. And if it is so and prevails, it will be a bad omen. During the long course of the history of the British rule in India, the official interpretation has held sway. And, it has been enforced. I have not hesitated before now to say that the office of the lawgiver, judge and executioner is combined in one person in India. Is not the state document a departure from the imperialistic tradition? I have answered 'yes'.

"Be that as it may. Let us try to glance at the shortcomings.

"The delegation, after a brief spell in Simla, returned to Delhi on the 14th instant, issued their statement on the 16th, and yet we are far from the popular government at the Centre. One would have thought that they would have formed the Central Government before issuing the statement. But they issued the statement first and then set about the search for the formation of the interim government. It is taking a long time coming, whilst millions are starving for want of food and clothing. This is defect number one.

"The question of paramountcy is unsolved. It is not enough to say that paramountcy will end with the end of the British rule in India. If it persists without check during the interim period, it will leave behind a difficult legacy for the independent government. If it

cannot be ended with the establishment of the interim government, it should be exercised in co-operation with it and for the benefit of the people of the states. It is the people who want and are fighting for independence, not the princes who are sustained by an alien power, even when they claim not to be its creation for the suppression of liberties of the people. The princes, if they are true to their professions, should welcome this popular use of paramountcy, so as to accommodate themselves to the sovereignty of the people envisaged under the new scheme. This is defect number two.

"Troops, it is declared, are to remain during the interim period for preservation of internal peace and protection against external aggression. If they are kept for such use during the period of grace, their presence will act as a damper on the constituent assembly and is more likely than not to be wanted, even after the establishment of independence, so called. A nation that desires alien troops for its safety, internal or external, or has them imposed upon it, can never be described as independent in any sense of the term. It is an effete nation, unfit for self-government. The acid test is that it should be able to stand alone, erect and unbending. During the interim period we must learn to hop unaided, if we are to walk when we are free. We must cease from now to be spoon-fed.

"That these things are not happening, as we would wish, is to be accounted as our weakness, be the causes whatever they be, not the cussedness of the British Government or their people. Whatever we get, will be our deserts, not a gift from across the seas. The three ministers have come to do what they have declared. It will be time to blame them, when they go back upon the British declarations and devise ways and means of perpetuating the British rule. Though there is ground for fear, there is no sign on the horizon that they have said one thing and meant another."

## *Rocks Ahead*

1946

The Working Committee's deliberations had been practically engaging the whole of Gandhi's time during the week following upon the Cabinet Mission's pronouncement. In his prayer discourse of May 21, 1946, Gandhi dwelt upon the conditions of individual and national redemption. In the song that had been sung by Harijan girls at the prayer, it was said that since God was known as the Redeemer, He would redeem us some day. "The orthodox conception of redemption," he stated, "is redemption in the life to come. What I want to tell you is that redemption in that song is promised us here and now, if we fulfil the necessary conditions. They are, first, self-purification, and secondly, obedience to the law. It is vain, and it is demoralizing to expect that, in the life to come, God will vindicate His title as Redeemer by saving us, while we continue to carry the load of sin on our heads in this life. A business man who lies and cheats his simple-minded and ignorant customers cannot hope to be saved."

It is said that to one who is good, the whole world becomes good. "That is true so far as the individual is concerned," said Gandhi. "But goodness becomes dynamic, only when it is practised in the face of evil. If you return good for good only, it is a bargain and carries no merit, but if you return good for evil, it becomes a redeeming force. The evil ceases before it and it goes on gathering volume and momentum, like a snowball, till it becomes irresistible."

"How could a slave country like India be redeemed?" he asked. His answer was that a slave country owed the continuation of its slavery to the vices which the slavery engenders. The way of self-purification, therefore, was also the way of redemption for a slave country. It was no use putting off hopes for redemption to a future state. If they failed to gain redemption here, they would probably miss it in the hereafter too. "Let us, therefore, turn the searchlight

inward, purge ourselves of all dross," he said. "If we shed our petty quarrels and animosities and forget all communal differences and petty distinctions, foreign troops would find their occupation gone and nobody would be able to keep us in servitude for a day."

The picture of "the land without regrets and sorrow", which he presented in the course of his discourses during the previous week, had gripped him. He got that song printed and distributed at the prayer meeting.

A gentleman had donated Rs. 51 for the free distribution of the printed copies of the song, but Gandhi did not want it to be treated as a handbill and, therefore, decided that people should show their appreciation of it by paying the price of one pice. He was under an impression that the amount of the promised donation was Rs. 101, and he had announced that figure accordingly. But when it was pointed out to him that the donation was Rs. 51 only, he retorted that he could not allow Harijans to be done out of the full amount which he had announced and, therefore, the donor should come forward and make up the balance. He apologized for the delay in the printing and the distribution of the leaflet and twitted the imperial city for its dilatoriness. He twitted the printers too for their greed, in charging for paper and printing. When he was told that nothing had been charged for printing, he twitted them still for charging the price of the paper.

As a result of Gandhi's remark, the gentleman who had donated Rs. 51 brought an additional fifty rupees to make up the balance of Rs. 101. All the printed copies of the song being sold out, a fresh lot was printed for distribution. Gandhi, however, decided that it should be sold at the fixed price of one pice for each copy and, on no account, at a fancy price. Similarly, he said that he would hereafter insist on the printer receiving his due charge for printing and stationery. He did not want to be greedy. It was a subtle snare in which the humanitarian workers sometimes fell. If he charged more for the *bhajan* than its fixed price, the money would become tainted and it would hinder, instead of helping the cause of the removal of untouchability. Untouchability could not be eradicated by the expenditure of crores of rupees. Untouchability could be eradicated in the twinkling of an eye without spending a penny, if there was a true change of heart among the so-called Caste Hindus. That would elevate both the Harijans and *savarnas*. "Today the *savarnas* ride on

the backs of the so-called untouchables," he said. "That degrades them both. For, it is nature's law that one cannot degrade another without degrading himself."

Gandhi's next two discourses were devoted to nature cure or the cure of ailments, spiritual, mental and physical, by the application principally of Ramanam. A correspondent had written to him, pointing out how some people superstitiously wrote Ramanam on their clothes, so as to wear it 'next to the heart'. Others wrote Ramanam millions of times minutely on a piece of paper, which they afterwards cut up into small bits and swallowed, so that they could claim that Ramanam had entered into them. Another correspondent had asked him whether he had prescribed Ramanam as the sovereign remedy for all ills, because Rama was God's anointed and was a descendant of Dasharatha, the illustrious King of Ayodhya. There were people who thought that he was self-deluded and he was trying to delude others by adding one more to the thousands of superstitions, which filled this superstition-ridden land. He had no answer to such criticism. He said to himself, what did it matter if truth was abused and fraud practised in its name by others? So long as he was sure of his truth, he could not help proclaiming it for fear of its being misunderstood or abused. "Nobody in this world possesses absolute truth," he said. "This is God's attribute alone. Relative truth is all we know. Therefore, we can only follow the truth as we see it. Such pursuit of truth cannot lead anyone astray."

Gandhi reiterated that Rama, whose name he prescribed as the infallible remedy for all ills, was neither the historical Rama nor the Rama of those who used the name as a charm or black magic. Rama whose name he prescribed as a cure-all was God, by taking whose name devotees attained purity and peace, and he said that it was the one infallible remedy for all the ailments, whether mental, spiritual or physical. It was, of course, possible to cure the physical ailment by going to doctors and *vaidyas*. But Ramanam enabled one to become one's own doctor or *vaidya*, and to find the elixir of healing within oneself. Even when the ailment could not be cured, because physically it was incurable, it enabled one to endure the ailment with equanimity and peace of mind. "A person who has faith in Ramanam would not run from pillar to post, and dance attendance at the doors of celebrated doctors and *vaidyas*, in order to prolong existence anyhow. Nor is Ramanam meant to be taken only

when the doctors and *vaidyas* have failed. It is meant to enable one to do without them altogether. For a believer in Ramanam, it is the first, as well as, the last remedy."

A lull in the Cabinet Mission's deliberations enabled Gandhi to take a brief holiday for rest and recuperation. He had been advised by his doctors some time ago to pass two months of the hot weather at some hill-station, in order to build up a reserve for the rest of the year. He could not do so this year for reasons that all knew. He decided to go to Mussoorie in preference to Panchgani or Simla as it was nearer. He would return, when the Maulana Saheb or the Cabinet Mission required him again.

Announcing his plans to the prayer gathering, he said that they had been coming to the prayer meeting daily, in order to join him in reciting Ramanam, or rather in learning how to do so. Ramanam could not be taught by word of mouth. But more potent than the spoken word was the silent thought. "A single right thought can envelop the world. It is never wasted. The very attempt to clothe a thought in word or action limits it. What man had ever succeeded in expressing fully a thought in word or in action?"

"Then, why not go into perpetual silence, one might ask," said Gandhi. "In theory, that is possible. But it is very difficult to fulfil the conditions by which silent thought can wholly replace action." He for one could not claim to have attained the requisite intensity or control over thought. He could not altogether keep out useless or irrelevant thoughts from his mind. That required infinite patience, vigilance and *tapascharya* to attain that state.

He hoped that they would continue to recite Ramanam in their homes severally and in company, during his absence. The secret of collective prayer was that the emanation of silent influence from one to the other could be of help in their spiritual striving.

At the end of May, he left for Mussoorie. In his prayer speech, he recalled his previous visits to Mussoorie, which were in connection with the Congress work. This time, he had come on his own. "As you know, I am not even a four-anna member, but a humble servant of the Congress like the unnamed crores, who are not on its rolls but who serve it all the same, humbly and quietly, to the best of their capacity, without expectation of name or reward. And why? Because, thirst of freedom has taken possession of their souls. They do not know how freedom can be won. But they have heard that

the Congress is the one organization that has for the last sixty years been fighting the good fight that would bring freedom to all without distinction. That is why, they are devoted to it. I have come to Mussoorie as one of them—a humble, private individual." He did not want anyone to be bothered with taking care of him. For, God alone was his protector. "How can puny man, who is not sure even of his own tomorrow, presume to protect another?" he said. "I am content to be under God's care. He may protect or destroy. I know He sometimes even destroys to protect."

He was told before, and again since his arrival at Mussoorie, of the life of the fashionable rich in Mussoorie. Like other Himalayan hill-stations, Mussoorie was no place for the poor. "The poor slave for you," he said. "They draw your rickshaws. It hurts me, it ought to hurt you too, that a fellow human being should pull the rickshaw of a healthy and able-bodied person. I say this not to criticize you, but to remind you of those, whose very existence you are otherwise apt to forget, but who nevertheless are India. It is up to you to think of them and to enter into their lives. I long for the day, when Ramanam would save me from the necessity of having to go to the hill-stations during summer. Crores cannot go to the hill-stations. They are born to live and die on the plains. I have not come here for pleasure, but only under medical necessity, so that I might be able to serve you the more. Give me your blessings and let me have a little quiet, so that I can attend to my work and commune with the Maker undisturbed."

The food shortage was taxing many minds and suggestions were pouring in even at Mussoorie. A correspondent wrote: "There is a large damage to crops by deer, rabbit, boar, pig and pigeon. These have food value and can be used for food. By proper organization it should be possible to organize shooting of these animals, so as to provide regular supply in certain areas, particularly in large cities. Incidentally, the destruction to a large extent of these would be reflected in reduced destruction of field crops."

Gandhi replied: "A confirmed respecter of all life, though I am, I have no difficulty in recommending for acceptance by meat-eaters the suggestion that the correspondent's wisdom has dictated."

Another correspondent wrote: "You have written that your non-violence contemplates destruction of animals dangerous to mankind, such as, the leopards, wolves, snakes, scorpions, etc. You had put

twenty-seven questions to Shri Raichandbhai from Durban. One question was: 'What should a seeker do, when a snake attacks him?' His answer was: 'He should not kill the snake and, if it bites, he should let it do so.' How is it that you speak differently now?"

Gandhi replied: "My non-violence is not merely kindness to all the living creatures. The emphasis laid on the sacredness of sub-human life in Jainism is understandable. But that can never mean that one is to be kind to this life, in preference to human life. While writing about the sacredness of such life, I take it that the sacredness of human life has been taken for granted. The former has been over-emphasized. And, while putting it into practice, the idea has undergone distortion. For instance, there are many who derive complete satisfaction in feeding ants. It would appear that the theory has become a wooden, lifeless dogma. Hypocrisy and distortion are passing current under the name of religion.

"Ahimsa is the highest ideal. It is meant for the brave, never for the cowardly. To benefit by others' killing and delude oneself into the belief, that one is being very religious and non-violent, is sheer self-deception.

"The so-called votary of non-violence will not stay in a village which is visited by a leopard everyday. He will run away and, when someone has killed the leopard, he will return to take charge of his hearth and home. This is not non-violence. This is a coward's violence. The man who has killed the leopard has at least given proof of some bravery. The man who takes advantage of the killing is a coward. He can never expect to know true non-violence.

"In life, it is impossible to eschew violence completely. Now the question arises, where is one to draw the line? The line cannot be the same for everyone. For, although, essentially the principle is the same, yet everyone applies it in his or her own way. What is one man's food can be another's poison. Meat-eating is a sin for me. Yet, for another person, who has always lived on meat and never seen anything wrong in it, to give it up simply, in order to copy me, will be a sin.

"If I wish to be an agriculturist and stay in a jungle, I will have to use the minimum unavoidable violence, in order to protect my fields. I will have to kill monkeys, birds and insects, which eat up my crops. If I do not wish to do so myself, I will have to engage someone to do it for me. There is not much difference between the two.

To allow crops to be eaten up by animals, in the name of ahimsa, while there is a famine in the land, is certainly a sin. Evil and good are relative terms. What is good under certain conditions can become an evil or a sin, under a different set of conditions.

"Man is not to drown himself in the well of the shastras, but he is to dive in their broad ocean and bring out pearls. At every step, he has to use his discrimination, as to what is ahimsa and what is *himsa.* In this, there is no room for shame or cowardice. The poet had said that the road leading up to God is for the brave, never for the cowardly.

"Finally, Raichandbhai's advice to me was that if I had courage, if I wanted to see God face to face, I should let myself be bitten by a snake, instead of killing it. I have never killed a snake before, or after, receiving that letter. That is no matter of credit for me. My ideal is to be able to play with the snakes and scorpions fearlessly. But it is merely a wish so far. Whether and when it will be realized I do not know. Everywhere, I have let my people kill both. I could have prevented them, if I had wished. But how could I? I did not have the courage to take them up with my own hands and teach my companions a lesson in fearlessness. I am ashamed that I could not do so. But my shame could not benefit them or me.

"If Ramanam favours me, I might still attain that courage some day. In the meantime, I consider it my duty to act, as I have stated above. Religion is a thing to be lived. It is not mere sophistry."

A correspondent complained: "When a Congress minister visits any place, the local bodies or local institutions show their respect by presenting addresses of value. In almost all cases, these things become the property of the minister."

Gandhi wrote: "The complaint is valid. No public servant should receive for his own use addresses of value or costly floral tributes. These things have become a nuisance, if they are not much worse. The argument is often trotted out that costly frames and flowers put money into the pockets of the artisans. The artisans are well able to take care of themselves, without the aid of ministers and the like. These gentlemen do not travel for pleasure. Theirs are business tours undertaken often for listening to what the people have to say. The addresses presented to them need not extol their virtues, which are their own reward. They should express accurately local wants and grievances, if any. In these times, the ministers and their secretaries

have a hard task before them. The public adulation instead of being a help, will become a hindrance."

In another article, Gandhi wrote:

"I have discovered honourable members of assemblies using the most expensive embossed note-paper, even for private use. So far as I know, office stationery cannot be used for private purposes, such as writing to friends or relatives, or for letters from members of assemblies to constituents, outside matters of public business. So far as I know, this is a universal objection in every part of the world.

"But, for this poor country, my objection goes much deeper. The stationery I refer to is too expensive for us. Englishmen, belonging to the most expensive country in the world and who had to flourish on the awe they could inspire in us, introduced the expensive and massive buildings for the offices and bungalows, requiring for their upkeep an army of servants and hangers-on. If we copy their style and their habits, we will be ruined ourselves and carry the country in this ruin. And what was tolerated in the case of the conquerors, will not be tolerated in ours. There is, too, paper shortage. I am of opinion, therefore, that all these expensive habits should be given up. Handmade paper with ordinarily printed letter-heads in Nagari and Urdu should be used. The embossed stationery already printed can easily be cut up and put to better use, and should not be used up under cover of economy. Surely, the village products cannot be made to wait, till the expensive and possibly foreign stuff is used up. The popular governments should signalize their advent by adopting popular measures and inexpensive habits."

During his ten days' stay at Mussoorie, Gandhi had no engagements and interviews. A few foreign correspondents sought him out in his seclusion and were able to have talks with him on matters of common interest, politics being, of course, excluded. They interviewed him during his morning walks.

"Your khadi and handicrafts and rural economy programme will have a great appeal for an agricultural country, as, for instance, the Balkans," said one. "But to many of us, as, indeed, to many of your countrymen, it appears as a brake on progress. Most people think planning and industrialism on a wide scale to be necessary."

"How does my programme interfere with the progress of India?" Gandhi asked in reply. "India is mainly a rural country, consisting of 700,000 villages."

The correspondent said that this was unfair to the cities. "What about the big cities like Bombay and Calcutta?"

"On the contrary, the boot is on the other leg," replied Gandhi. "I regard the growth of the cities as an evil thing, unfortunate for the mankind and the world, unfortunate for England and certainly unfortunate for India. The British have exploited India through its cities. The latter have exploited the villages. The blood of the villages is the cement, with which the edifice of the cities is built. I want the blood that is today inflating the arteries of the cities to run once again in the blood-vessels of the villages."

The correspondent, however, was not satisfied. "The initial mistake having been made," he argued, "you do not mean to suggest that all those steps should inexorably be retraced, even though it might involve pulling down what has already been built."

"Why not?" asked Gandhi. "Once we discover that a mistake has been made, the only course open to us is to recognize our error, retrace our steps, and begin anew."

"Somehow, the belief prevails in the modern world," persisted the correspondent, "that retracing one's steps in this respect would be incompatible with progress."

"But, what do you do, when a ship loses her course on the sea?" asked Gandhi. "She does not continue to follow the wrong course. She at once retraces her course and then starts afresh. How often must have Columbus done that, or else he would have remained a derelict all the time."

"Does that mean that you would depopulate the cities and send all the city folk back to the villages?"

"I would not do that," replied Gandhi. "All I want is that they should re-adjust their lives, so as to cease to sponge upon the poor village folk and make to the latter what reparation is possible, even at this late hour, by helping to resuscitate their ruined economy."

"What would you do, if you were made the dictator of India for one day?" asked the correspondent, changing the topic.

"I would not accept it in the first place," said Gandhi, "but if I did become a dictator for one day, I would spend it in cleaning the stables of the Viceroy's House, that the hovels of Harijans in Delhi are. It is disgraceful that under the very nose of the Viceroy such poverty and squalor should exist, as there is in the Harijan quarters. And why does the Viceroy need such a big house? If I had

my way, I would turn it into a hospital." And he gave the instance of President Kreuger, whose residence was not even as good as the "Hermitage" of Birla, in which he was staying.

"Well, supposing they continue your dictatorship for the second day?" asked the correspondent.

"The second day would be a prolongation of the first," retorted Gandhi, amidst laughter.

After a brief rest, Gandhi left Mussoorie by car at past midnight on June 8th to resume his interrupted work in Delhi. The Working Committee dispersed on May 24 to meet again on June 9. At their last session, the Working Committee had expressed inability to give their final opinion on the statement of the cabinet delegation, unless they had before them a full picture of the national provisional government which the British Government proposed to establish at the Centre. Hopes alternated with fears in the breasts of the people during the days that followed. Speaking to the expectant gathering at the evening prayers, Gandhi counselled faith and patience. In an editorial entitled "The Unknown", dated June 10, he wrote:

"Some learned men describe Him as Unknowable, some others as Unknown, yet others as 'Not This'. 'The Unknown' is good for the present purpose.

"When yesterday (the 9th June), I said a few words to the prayer audience, I could say nothing more than that they should pray for and rely upon the strength and the guidance that this big X could give. There were difficulties to be overcome by all the parties in the great Indian drama that was being enacted before them. They were all to rely upon the Unknown, who had often confounded man's wisdom and, in the twinkling of an eye, upset man's tin-pot plans. The British party claimed to believe in God, the Unknown. The Muslim League too did likewise. They delighted in saying 'Allah-O-Akbar'. The Congress naturally had no single equivalent cry. Nevertheless, if it sought to represent the whole of India, it represented millions of believers, no matter to what compartment in the House of God they belonged.

"At the time of writing, in spite of my irrepressible optimism, I am unable to say decisively that, at least, in political parlance, the thing is safe. All I can say, therefore, is that if, with the best efforts of all the parties, the unsafe happens, I would invite them to join with me in saying that it was as well and that safety lay in unsafety.

If we are all children of God, as we are, whether we know it or not, we will take in good part whatever happens and work with zest and confidence for the next step, whatever that may be. The only condition for that zest is that each party does its honest best for the good of the whole of India. For that is the stake and no other."

In the course of his speech on June 16, Gandhi said that the three parties concerned were striving to prevent a breakdown. "People must not, therefore, lose hope. Reputation of the Cabinet Mission is at stake. They cannot afford a breakdown. And there ought to be no breakdown on the side of the Congress and the League either, if the goal of all is the same, as it is claimed that it is, namely, the independence of India." He, therefore, pleaded for patience. "It is easy to destroy, but to build is a slow and a labouring process. The independence of 400 millions is no mango trick." The Congress Working Committee were still labouring away in order to avoid a breakdown. If, however, in spite of their best efforts, a breakdown did occur in the end, he would ask them to accept it as God's will in a proper spirit of resignation, without perturbation or despondency, if they had a living faith in God.

His optimism and faith were, however, soon put to a severe test. "A nameless fear has seized me that all is not well," he remarked in the course of a talk with a friend. "As a result, I feel paralysed. But I won't corrupt your mind by communicating my unsupported suspicions to you." The declaration of the Europeans that they were going to exercise their right to take part in the constitution making was the first warning signal of the rocks ahead.

Lawyer friends had told Gandhi that if the matter were taken to a law court, the verdict would surely be against the Europeans. But from the papers he had gathered, that the Europeans intended to exercise the right, which they thought, they had. Till now, they had used their vote to uphold the British power and acted as a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims. He appealed to them, therefore, apart from the question of legalities, to abstain from any interference. No Congressman would wish to drag them to the law court. They should recognize the signs of time and make a voluntary declaration that the newspaper report was wrong and that they had no wish to interfere in the affairs of the Indians, which ought to be settled by the Indians themselves and that they would not exercise their votes for the selection of the candidates for the constituent assembly, nor

would they stand as the candidates. They should no longer impose themselves upon India. Whatever they might have done in the past, they should alleviate communal bitterness, not accentuate it. They should wish India to win her freedom, as early as possible. Such a statement would be graceful for the Europeans. It was up to the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy, to see that this foreign element was not used to affect the elections in any way whatsoever.

Gandhi likened the Cabinet Mission to a mother, who saw that her child was dying. "Still she does not give up hope. She keeps on trying the prescriptions of the *vaidyas* or *hakims*, till the last moment." Similarly, the mission did not wish to give up striving. "They are trying to bring the Congress and the League together. They went to Maulana Saheb, they went to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah, and they are striving with the Europeans to do the right thing. The Europeans have said that they are going to exercise their right, which is not theirs at all. But if the Congress and the League appealed to them, they might consider their request."

"Let it be understood," added Gandhi, "there is no question of going to them with the beggar's bowl. For, they have no place in the constituent assembly according to the legal interpretation of the Cabinet Mission's paper."

"To enslave another country is unnatural," he said. "Merely by making a pious resolve, you will not get off India's back. Corresponding action is required. The mission are striving and there is no reason for India to doubt their bona fides. Their task is difficult." The Congress, the League and the British were all labouring under unnatural conditions.

The announcement that invitations had been sent to fourteen individuals by their names to help the Viceroy to form his cabinet was made on June 16th. Having failed in their attempt to bring the two major parties together, the mission had to devise some way of removing the deadlock. Their failure was nothing to be surprised at, observed Gandhi. "What is surprising is that, instead of following the democratic procedure of inviting the one or the other party to form a national government, the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission have decided to impose a government of their choice on the country. The result may well be an incompatible and an explosive mixture. There are, however, two ways of looking at a picture. You can look upon it from the dark." He said that he believed in looking at the

bright side and he had invited the others to do the likewise. "Thus regarded, what appear to be blemishes in the Viceregal statement, would be seen to be really its beauty." It might, however, be that there was no bright side. Then the Cabinet Mission would stand exposed. They would lose nothing by trusting. He had suggested to the Working Committee some tests by which the statement might be tested. He held the view firmly that the fulfilment of those conditions was essential for the Congress acceptance. But he could not say whether they would be agreeable to either party. It was, therefore, very difficult to say with certainty what the Congress Working Committee would decide. One thing, however, he could say without any hesitation. At no stage had the Congress showed dilatoriness. It was a democratic organization and could not carry things by an executive fiat like the Viceroy, for instance. It could proceed only by consulting and by satisfying even the weakest minority, whom it claimed to represent. "You should bear with the mission too," said Gandhi. "They have inherited the traditions of imperialism, which they cannot outgrow all at once. And poor India has to suffer. We must not blame the mission, however, for not throwing it overboard overnight. Let us trust their bona fides. Let us not act upon mere suspicion. But let us all join in the prayer that God may bless all the parties with wisdom and cleanness of heart."

Gandhi wrote on "The European Vote" on June 17:

"No less a person than the president of the European Association has exhibited the lion's paw. That seems to be the naked truth. That the Europeans will neither vote, nor offer themselves for the election should be a certainty, if a constituent assembly worthy of the name is at all to be formed. The British power in India has four arms—the official military, the official civil, the unofficial civil and the unofficial military. So, when the ruling class speaks of the unofficial European as not being under their control, it is nonsense. The official exists for the unofficial, and the former would have no work, if the latter did not exist. The British gunboat came in the wake of the British commerce. The whole of India is an occupied country. We have to examine in this light the exploits of the president of the European Association. In the intoxication of power, he does not seem to have taken the trouble to ascertain whether the state paper has provided for the legal power for his community to vote or be voted for in the proposed constituent assembly. For his

and his constituents' edification, I have secured the opinion from the leader of the Bar in Delhi.

"Did the president condescend to inquire of the mission what his moral and legal position was? Or, did he hold them cheap, because he represented the real imperialism which the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy representing British Labour were struggling to discard?

"It is the straw which shows the way the wind is blowing.

"This unseasonable performance of the European Association is to my mind the greatest disturbing factor to shake the faith in the reality of the mission's work. Has the mission come before its time? Will the gun-protected Europeans of India silence their guns and stake their fortunes Andrews-like, purely on goodwill of the masses of India? Or, do they expect in their generation to continue the imposition of foreign rule on India?

"How can they say, they 'are not intransigent'? Their statement reeks of intransigence. They have a loaded communal franchise, glaringly in Bengal and Assam. What right had they to be in the assemblies at all? What part have they played in the two assemblies save to embarrass the people of Bengal and of Assam, by dividing the communities? This 'load' was not imposed upon them. It would have redounded to their honour, if they had repudiated it. Instead, they have welcomed the 'white man's burden'. And even now, at the hour of the dawn, they would graciously contribute to constitution-making!!! Not everyone who says 'I am not intransigent' is really so; he only is who says nothing, but lets his deeds eloquently speak for themselves.

"They have been made to look so foolish in their latest statement, as to say that they would refrain from voting for themselves but would use their vote for electing their henchmen wearing the Indian skin! They would, if they could, repeat the trick, which has enabled them, a handful, to strangle the dumb millions of India. How long will this agony last! Do the mission propose to bolster up this unholy ambition and yet expect to put to sea the frail barque of their constituent assembly? Indians cannot perform the obvious duty of the mission for them."

Thanks to the irrepressible and, very often, irresponsible activity of the pressmen, the imperial city during the week had been a seething cauldron of speculation and rumours and false alarms. Gandhi had more than once to appeal to the newspapermen not to injure

themselves and the cause by indulging in this kind of journalism. "If I were appointed dictator for a day in the place of the Viceroy, I would stop all newspapers," he said on June 19. "With the exception of *Harijan*, of course," he added with a smile and a wink. Incidentally, he mentioned that if he had to rename his weekly, he would call it not *Harijan* but *Bhangi*, that being more in tune with his present temper and the need of the hour, as he understood it. As an illustration of the infinite harm that might result from such irresponsible journalism, he pointed out that if the people were to believe what had been appearing in the press about his part in the deliberations of the Working Committee, the Hindus would be right to execrate him as the enemy of their interests. It was further being made to appear that his was the only intransigent voice in the Working Committee. He wanted them to dismiss all that as pure imagination. He appealed to newspapermen to put a curb on their pen. Failing that, it was up to the public to shed their craving for "potted" news and to cease to patronize papers that purveyed it or at least cease to be misled by what might appear in them.

"There are two kinds of curiosity," Gandhi observed, "healthy and unhealthy. One should always be curious to know one's duty at every step. But itch for news is a variety of dissipation, debilitating to the mind and spirit, unless it is properly curbed."

In spite of its keen desire to come to a speedy decision on the Cabinet Mission's proposals, the Congress was not able to escape a malicious campaign of vilification in a certain section of the press. It had been accused of procrastination and delaying tactics. And when that theme was played out, it was given out that the delay was due to the dissensions in the Working Committee. Giving the lie to these innuendoes, Gandhi remarked that it was wholly untrue that the delay in arriving at a final decision was due to the divisions in the Working Committee. Differences of opinion were inevitable in a living organization. He himself did not know what the final decision of the Congress Working Committee was going to be. It was but natural that there should be more Hindus on the Congress register than the Muslims, as the Hindu population preponderated in India. But the Congress could not by any stretch of imagination be called a Hindu organization. Its president, Maulana Azad, had occupied the presidential chair for a longer period than any other president in the Congress history. He was held in equal respect by all those

who claim to be of the Congress. The Congress had constituted itself into a trustee, not of any particular community, but of India as a whole. In an organization like that, it always became the duty of the majority to make sacrifices for the minorities and backward sections, not in a spirit of patronizing favour but in a dignified manner and as a duty. "In the eyes of the Congress," he said, "Hindus and Musalmans, Parsis, Christians and Sikhs are all Indians and, therefore, equally entitled to its care. The Congress has no sanction except that of non-violence. Unlike the Viceroy, who has the entire armed force of the British Empire at his back, the Congress President can rely only on the united and whole-hearted co-operation of all communities and classes to give effect to India's will to independence. The Working Committee is, therefore, anxious that we should accept responsibility at the Centre, only with the unanimous goodwill of all communities. That is why, they were giving such anxious thought to all the various interests. And that is a ticklish job. They don't want to make the Interim Government the arena of unseemly quarrels among ourselves."

Meanwhile, came the news of Nehru's arrest in Kashmir where he had proceeded on a short visit to assist in Sheikh Abdullah's trial. Gandhi referred to the arrest on June 21 and said that a telegram had been received during the session of the Working Committee saying that Jawaharlal Nehru was well and cheerful. He was not yet in a position to give his estimate of the situation, arising out of the action taken by Nehru or the Kashmir Government. For that, he must meet and hear Nehru first and know the story of the Kashmir Government's doings.

Nehru, he observed, was under the Congress discipline. He was a member of the Congress Working Committee and the President-elect of the Congress. Nehru's name was on the list of the proposed cabinet for the interim period. And therefore, his presence in Delhi was most essential at the present juncture. The Working Committee could not take any decision in his absence, if his presence could be secured. The Kashmir Government had prevented him from entering Kashmir. The Congress President had, therefore, sent him a wire through the Kashmir Government to return to Delhi. He had also sent a message to the Viceroy to put him in telephonic communication with Nehru and to make arrangements for his quickest return to Delhi. The Viceroy had already moved in the matter.

On June 24, Gandhi referred to the report of the deliberations of the Congress Working Committee that had appeared in the newspapers. It was true that the Working Committee had decided to reject the proposals put before them for the formation of a provisional government for the interim period. But the committee had decided to go into the proposed constituent assembly. There were several flaws in the proposal for the constituent assembly, but the Working Committee had reasoned that, after all, the constituent assembly would consist of the elected representatives of the people. So, after considering every aspect of the questions, they had decided that it should not be rejected.

The papers had also reported that the Working Committee's decision had been taken in the teeth of his opposition. But that was a misleading statement to make, said Gandhi. The fact was that for the last four or five days, his mind had been filled with a vague misgiving. He saw darkness, where he had seen light before. He knew that the darkness indicated lack of faith in God. One whose whole being was filled with God should never experience darkness.

Be that as it may, stated Gandhi, the fact remained that he did not see the light just then. And what was more, he could not explain or give reasons for his fear. He had, therefore, simply placed his misgivings before the Congress Working Committee and had told them that they should come to a decision independently of him. Those, whose function was to give a lead to the country, could not afford to be guided by another's unreasoned instinct. The members could not guide the destiny of the country, unless they had the capacity to think for themselves and convince others by reason. The members of the Working Committee, he concluded, were the servants of the nation. They had no other sanction, except the willing consent of the people whom they tried to serve. The people would remove them, whenever they liked. His advice to the people, therefore, was to follow the lead given by the Working Committee. He would tell them when he saw the light. But so long as darkness surrounded him in anything, nobody should follow him in it.

The Cabinet Mission's proposals were broad-based on a scheme for grouping of the provinces into A, B and C groups for purposes of constitution-making. The constituent assembly which was to consist of 389 members, including 93 representatives of states, was after the preliminary session to split up into sections representing those

groups to settle provincial and group constitutions. Thereafter, all representatives were to re-assemble to settle the constitution of the Union. These representatives were to be elected on communal basis by the provincial assemblies, and the number of representatives each province was to send was determined by its population strength. These groups were given the right to secede from the Union, if any wanted to, after a period of ten years, which amounted to an acceptance of the principle of Pakistan. The British Government undertook to give effect to any constitution that this constituent assembly framed. India was welcome to remain within the empire, but if it chose to walk out of it, it had every right to do so.

The Congress accepted the long-term plan of the Cabinet Mission, having already rejected the interim proposals, while the League had accepted the short-term scheme, having consented to co-operate in the long-term proposals as well. The Congress was not prepared to accept the League's claim to appoint all the Muslim members to the Interim Government and the unjust demand for parity. On June 26 Government announced a short adjournment in the efforts to form an Interim Government and the establishment of "a temporary caretaker government of officials". The Congress stand was made clear in the Working Committee resolution:

"The Working Committee have been continuously engaged in giving earnest consideration to the proposals made on behalf of the British Government in the statements of May 16 and June 16 and have considered the correspondence in regard to them between the Congress President and the members of the Cabinet delegation and the Viceroy.

"The Working Committee have examined both sets of proposals from the point of view of the Congress objective of immediate independence and the opening out of the avenues leading to the rapid advance of the masses, economically and socially, so that people's material standards may be raised and poverty, malnutrition, famine and the lack of the necessaries of life may be ended, all the people of the country may have freedom and opportunity to grow and to develop according to their own genius. These proposals fall short of these objectives. Yet the committee considered them earnestly in all their aspects because of their desire to find some way for peaceful settlement of India's problem and the ending of the conflict between India and England.

"The kind of independence that the Congress has aimed at is the establishment of a united and democratic Indian federation, with a central authority, which would command respect from the nations of the world, maximum provincial autonomy and equal rights for all men and women in the country. The limitations of the central authority, as contained in the proposals, as well as the system of grouping of the provinces, weakened the structure and was unfair to some provinces, such as the N.-W.F. Province and Assam, and to some of the minorities, notably the Sikhs, the committee disapproved of this. They felt, however, that, taking the proposals as a whole, there was sufficient scope for enlarging and strengthening the central authority and for ensuring the right of a province to act according to its choice in regard to grouping, and to give protection to such minorities, as might otherwise be placed at a disadvantage. Certain other objections were also raised on their behalf, notably the possibility of non-nationals taking any part in constitution-making. It is clear that it would be a breach of both the letter and spirit of the statement of May 16, if any non-Indian participated in the voting or standing for election to the constituent assembly.

"In the proposals for an Interim Government, contained in the statement of June 16, the defects related to matters of vital concern to the Congress. Some of these have been pointed out in the letter dated June 25 of the Congress President to the Viceroy. The provincial government must have power and authority and responsibility and they should function in fact, if not in law, as *de facto* independent government, leading to the full independence to come. The members of such a government can only hold themselves responsible to the people and not to any external authority. In the formation of a provisional or other government, Congressmen can never give up the national character of the Congress or accept an artificial and an unjust parity, or agree to the veto of a communal group. The Working Committee are unable to accept the proposals for the formation of an Interim Government, as contained in the statement of June 16.

"The Working Committee have, however, decided that the Congress should join the proposed constituent assembly, with a view to framing the constitution of a free, united and democratic India.

"While the committee have agreed to the Congress participation in the constituent assembly, it is in their opinion essential that a

representative and responsible provisional national government be formed at the earliest possible date. A continuation of authoritarian and unrepresentative Government can only add to the suffering of the famishing masses and the increased discontent. It will also put in jeopardy the work of the constituent assembly, which can only function in a free environment."

"The Working Committee have come to a decision after much deliberation," Gandhi said in a prayer meeting. "Their one concern is the good of India. I want to deduce from it that you should have faith that whatever is done in good faith will ultimately result in good. The last sixty years' unbroken record of the Congress service warrants such faith on your part. A man or a woman who serves the country with all his or her heart stands on a par with the tallest Congressman. In God's eyes, the service of the humblest will rank equal with that of the highest in the Congress organization, provided there is the uttermost dedication to the cause."

## *Real Danger*

1946

THE DAILY reports in the press about the dignified stand of the passive resisters in South Africa evoked pointed references in his prayer speeches: "The Union Government seem to be just watching. It is wrong. It is bad enough to pass an unjust law, but it is worse to let white people take it into their own hands. The passive resisters are not criminals, but respectable citizens. As self-respecting people they will prefer imprisonment to segregation in ghettos. They will resist injustice and oppression with their last breath. It is open to the Union Government to visit them with penalty of the law for breach or to abrogate the Segregation Act, which is contrary to the dictates of humanity. But it will be a dark blot on the history of the white civilization, if lynch law is allowed to have its course in South Africa."

On June 26, 1946, he wrote on "White Man's Burden":

"According to Reuters, picked Indians commenced satyagraha on June 14 in respect of the Segregation Law of the Union Parliament of South Africa. The same agency further reports that neither the Government nor the municipality had taken any action against the passive resisters, but that some whites of Durban had taken the execution of the law into their own hands by raiding the Indian camp at night, cutting down tents swiftly and carrying them away.

"The newspapers report that after three days of hooliganism, the borough police had posted themselves near the scene of the passive resistance and warned the hooligans against molesting the resisters and terrorizing them into submission. This is a heartening news. Let us hope that it can be taken at its full value and that the protection means fullest protection against lawlessness, sporadic or organized. Organized popular lawlessness is known as lynching, so shamelessly frequent in America.

"Before the Segregation Law was passed, white men, known to be respectable, had carried anti-Asiatic agitation to the point of frenzy.

Not satisfied with their triumph in having legislation compelling segregation passed, probably beyond expectation, the more advanced section among the agitators have become the executioners of their own laws. They do not know that they are thereby defaming the white man's name!!!

"My appeal to the white men and women, who have regard for laws, for which they have voted, is that they should create public opinion against hooliganism and lynch law.

"Passive resistance is aimed at the removal, in a most approved manner, of the bad laws, customs or other evils, and is designed to be a complete and effective substitute for the forcible methods, including hooliganism and lynch law. It is an appeal to the heart of man. Often, reason fails. It is dwarfed by self. The theory is that an adequate appeal to the heart never fails. Seeming failure is not of the law of satyagraha, but of incompetence of the satyagrahi by whatever cause induced. It may not be possible to give a complete historical instance. The name of Jesus at once comes to the lips. It is an instance of brilliant failure. And he has been acclaimed in the West as the prince of passive resisters. I showed years ago in South Africa that the adjective 'passive' was a misnomer, at least as applied to Jesus. He was the most active resister known, perhaps, to history. His was non-violence *par excellence*. But I must no longer stray from my main subject. It is the resistance of the Jesus type that the white hooligans are seeking to thwart. Let us hope that our countrymen's heroic resistance will not only shame the hooligans into silence, but will prove the precursor of the repeal of the Segregation Law that disfigures the statute book of South Africa. In concrete form, what pure suffering, wholly one-sided, does is to stir the public opinion against a wrong. The legislators are, after all, representatives of the public. In obedience to it, they have enacted a wrong. They have to reverse the process, when the same public, awakened to the wrong, demands its removal.

"The real 'white man's burden' is not insolently to dominate the coloured or black people under the guise of protection, it is to desist from the hypocrisy which is eating into them. It is time, the white men learnt to treat every human being as their equal. There is no mystery about whiteness of the skin. It has repeatedly been proved that given equal opportunity a man, be he of any colour or country, is fully equal to any other.

"Therefore, the white men throughout the world and, especially, of India should act upon their fellow men in South Africa and call upon them not to molest the Indian resisters, who are bravely struggling to preserve the self-respect of the Indians in the Union and the honour of their motherland. 'Do unto others, as you would that they should do unto you.' Or, do they take in vain the name of him, who said this? Have they banished from their hearts the great coloured Asiatic, who gave to the world the above message? Do they forget that the greatest of the teachers of mankind were all Asiatics and did not possess a white face? These, if they descended on earth and went to South Africa, will all have to live in the segregated areas and be classed as Asiatics and coloured people, unfit by law to be equals of whites.

"Is a civilization worth the name, which requires for its existence the very doubtful prop of a racial legislation and a lynch law? The silver lining to the cloud that hangs over the devoted heads of our countrymen lies in the plucky action of Rev. Scott, a white clergyman, and his equally white fellow workers, who have undertaken to share the sufferings of the Indian resisters."

On the same day, he wrote on the fight for civil liberty in Goa:

"It would appear from newspaper reports that Dr. Lohia went to Goa at the invitation of Goans and was served with an order to refrain from making speeches. According to Dr. Lohia's statement, for 188 years now, the people of Goa have been robbed of the right to hold meetings and form organizations. Naturally, he defied the order. He has thereby rendered a service to the cause of civil liberty and especially to the Goans. The little Portuguese settlement which merely exists on the sufferance of the British Government can ill afford to ape its bad manners. In free India, Goa cannot be allowed to exist as a separate entity, in opposition to the laws of the free state. Without a shot being fired, the people of Goa will be able to claim and receive the rights of citizenship of the free state. The present Portuguese Government will no longer be able to rely upon the protection of the British arms to isolate and keep under subjection the inhabitants of Goa against their will. I would venture to advise the Portuguese Government of Goa to recognize the signs of the times and come to honourable terms with its inhabitants, rather than function on any treaty that might exist between them and the British Government.

"To the inhabitants of Goa, I will say that they should shed fear of the Portuguese Government, as the people of other parts of India have shed fear of the mighty British Government, and assert their fundamental right of civil liberty and all it means. The differences of religion among the inhabitants of Goa should be no bar to the common civil life. Religion is for each individual, himself or herself, to live. It should never become a bone of contention or quarrel between religious sects."

In reply to the letter by the Governor-General of Portuguese India, stating that there was civil liberty in Goa, he wrote:

"That the Indians in Goa have been speechless is proof, not of the innocence or the philanthropic nature of the Portuguese Government but of the rule of terror. You will forgive me for not subscribing to your statement that there is full liberty in Goa and that the agitation is confined to a few malcontents. Every account, received by me personally and seen in the papers here in this part of India, confirms the contrary view. Though the politics of Dr. Lohia probably differ from mine, he has commanded my admiration for his having gone to Goa and put his finger on its black spot. Inhabitants of Goa can afford to wait for independence, until much greater India has regained it. But no person or group can thus remain without civil liberty, without losing self-respect. He has lighted a torch which the inhabitants of Goa cannot, except at their peril, allow to be extinguished. Both you and the inhabitants of Goa should feel thankful to him for lighting that torch. Therefore, your description of him as 'stranger' would excite laughter, if it was not so tragic. Surely the truth is that the Portuguese coming from Portugal are strangers, whether they come as philanthropists or as governors, exploiting the so-called weaker races of the earth.

"I, therefore, hope that you will revise your views, withdraw all the African police, declare yourself whole-heartedly for civil liberty in Goa and, if possible, even let the inhabitants of Goa frame their own government, and invite from Greater India more experienced Indians, to assist the inhabitants of Goa and even you in framing such government."

A tinge of subdued emotion marked his address at the farewell prayer gathering in Delhi on June 28: "Two months of mountain air seems to be necessary to keep me going for the rest of the year. It is surprising, the difference it makes."

During his journey to Poona, in the small hours of the night of June 29, while proceeding at full speed between Neral and Karjat, the special by which he was travelling suddenly bumped against some boulders that seemed to have purposely been placed upon the rail track to derail it. The dynamo of the rear bogie was wrecked and the engine itself damaged. But for the presence of mind of the engine driver, who pulled up the train in time, it might have been completely wrecked and all the passengers killed. During the night, while, for two hours, hammers were at work loosening and separating the wrecked structures, Gandhi slept soundly. When asked in the morning, whether he knew what had happened during the night he expressed surprise, saying "Oh! I wasn't aware of it."

Summing up his reaction to the incident at the first prayer discourse in Poona on June 30, he said: "This is perhaps the seventh occasion, when a merciful providence has rescued me from the very jaws of death. I have injured no man, nor have I borne enmity to any. Why should anyone have wished to take my life is more than I can understand. But the world is made like that. Man is born to live in the midst of dangers and alarms. The whole existence of man is a ceaseless duel between the forces of life and death. Even so, the latest accident strengthens my hope to live up to 125."

"Ramanam is my only strength and refuge," he said. "You should join me in reciting His name and install Him in your hearts, if you want me to continue to serve you. God makes crooked straight for us and sets things right, when they seem to go dead wrong."

During his short stay in Poona, he wrote an article for *Harijan* on "Atom Bomb and Ahimsa":

"It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in ahimsa, as nothing else can. It will, if it is meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world, that it will turn it away from violence for the time being. And this is very like a man glutting himself with the dainties to the point of nausea, and turning away from them only to return with redoubled zeal after the effect of nausea is well over. Precisely in the same manner will the world return to violence with renewed zeal, after the effect of disgust is worn out.

"Often does good come out of evil. But that is God's, not man's plan. Man knows that only evil can come out of evil, as good out of good.

"That atomic energy, though harnessed by the American scientists and army men for the destructive purposes, may be utilized by other scientists for the humanitarian purposes is undoubtedly within the realm of possibility. But surely, that is not what was meant by my American friends. They were not so simple, as to put me a question which connoted an obvious truth. An incendiary uses fire for his destructive and nefarious purpose, a housewife makes daily use of it in preparing nourishing food for mankind.

"So far as I can see, the atomic bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages. There used to be the so-called laws of war, which made war tolerable. Now we know the naked truth. War knows no law, except that of might. The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the allied arms, but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. And what has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see. The forces of nature act in a mysterious manner. We can but solve the mystery by deducing the unknown result from the known results of similar events. A slave-holder cannot hold a slave without putting himself or his deputy in the cage holding the slave. Let no one run away with the idea that I wish to put in a defence of the Japanese misdeeds in pursuance of Japan's unworthy ambition. The difference was only one of degree. I assume that Japan's greed was more unworthy. But the greater unworthiness conferred no right on the less unworthy of destroying without mercy, the men, women and children of Japan in a particular area.

"The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the atom bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter bombs, even as violence cannot be by counter violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter hatred only increases the surface, as well as the depth of hatred.

"I am aware that I am repeating what I have many times stated before and practised to the best of my ability and capacity. What I first stated was itself nothing new. It was as old as the hills. Only I recited no copy-book maxim but definitely announced what I believed in every fibre of my being. Sixty years of practice in various walks of life has only enriched the belief, which the experience of friends has fortified. It is, however, the central truth by which one can stand alone without flinching. I believe in what Max Müller said

years ago, namely, that truth needed to be repeated, as long as there were men who disbelieved it."

On July 5, he arrived in Bombay to participate in the Working Committee meeting and to guide the A.-I.C.C. members, who were to discuss a short resolution, namely, "Resolved that the resolution of the Working Committee dated June 26 be, and is hereby, ratified." The committee meetings were held at bhangi colony, where Gandhi was staying.

The A.-I.C.C. met on July 6 and the following day. Opening the proceedings, Maulana Azad reviewed the events in the country during the last six years, since he had been the President of the Congress. He said that those six years had been a period of great importance in India's history. It was noted for far-reaching changes in the international situation and in India's own struggle for independence. The country was on the threshold of freedom. They had only one more step to reach their goal.

The question before them, said Nehru, while taking charge of the office of the president, was not merely whether they should accept or reject any particular resolution or the merits or demerits of the proposed constituent assembly. That question was a very vital one and concerned the country's freedom. While the Congress had become more powerful than ever before, there was also internal weakness in the organization and it was their duty to see that weakness did not come in the way of their achieving their goal.

The foreign regime was beginning to end, and the Congress must be prepared to face any new problems that might arise. They could do that only if they were united and strong. They were faced with a famine. There was also the question of Indians in South Africa and of the position of Indians in Ceylon.

Azad moved a resolution seeking the ratification of the Working Committee's resolution passed at Delhi on June 26. The resolution referred to the consideration given by the Working Committee to the statement made on behalf of the British Government on May 16 and on June 16 and the correspondence in regard to them between the then Congress President and the members of the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy.

The socialists opposed the resolution and they quoted Gandhi's prayer meeting remarks in their speeches. Recommending the resolution to the house, Gandhi said:

"I have often said that man plans, but the success of his plans depends not on him but on the will of the Providence, which is the supreme arbiter of our destinies. Unlike you, I am not in my own right, but of sufferance. I have been told that some of my previous remarks about the Cabinet Mission's proposals have caused a good deal of confusion in the public mind. As a satyagrahi, it is always my endeavour to speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I never have a wish to hide anything from you. I hate mental reservations. But language is at best an imperfect medium of expression. No man can fully express in words, what he feels or thinks. Even the seers and prophets of old have suffered under that disability.

"I have not seen what has appeared in the papers about what I am supposed to have said with regard to the Cabinet Mission's proposals. I cannot read all the newspapers myself. I content myself with perusing only what my co-workers and assistants may place before me. But I hold that I have lost nothing thereby. Because of what has appeared in the press, an impression seems to have been created that I said one thing at Delhi and, am saying something different now. I did say in one of my speeches at Delhi with regard to the Cabinet Mission's proposals that I saw darkness, where I saw light before. That darkness has not yet lifted. If possible it has deepened. I could have asked the Congress Working Committee to turn down the proposal about the constituent assembly, if I could see my way clearly. You know my relations with the members of the Working Committee. Babu Rajendra Prasad might have been a High Court judge, but he chose instead to act as my interpreter and my clerk in Champaran. Then there is the Sardar. He has earned the nickname of being my yes-man. He does not mind it. He even flaunts it as a compliment. He is a stormy petrel. Once he used to dress and dine in the western style. But ever since he decided to cast his lot with me, my word has been law to him. But even he cannot see eye to eye with me in this matter. They both tell me that, whereas on all the previous occasions, I was able to support my instinct with reason and satisfy their head as well as their heart, this time I have failed to do so. I told them in reply that, whilst my own heart was filled with misgivings, I could not adduce any reason for it, otherwise I would have asked them to reject the proposals straightway. It was my duty to place my misgivings before them to put them on their guard. But they should examine what I had said in the cold light

of reason and accept my viewpoint, only if they were convinced of its correctness. Their decision, which they have arrived at after prolonged deliberations and which is almost unanimous, is before you. The members of the Working Committee are your faithful and tried servants. You should not lightly reject their resolution.

"I am willing to admit that the proposed constituent assembly is not the parliament of the people. It has many defects. But you are all seasoned and veteran fighters. A soldier is never afraid of danger. A soldier revels in it. If there are shortcomings in the proposed constituent assembly, it is for you to get them removed. It should be a challenge to combat, not a ground for rejection. I am surprised that Shri Jayaprakash Narayan said yesterday that it would be dangerous to participate in the proposed constituent assembly and, therefore, they should reject the Working Committee's resolution. I was not prepared to hear such defeatist language from the lips of a tried fighter like Jayaprakash. One line from a song composed by the late Choudhary Rambhaj Dutt has always made a very deep appeal to me. It means, 'We will never be defeated—nay, not even in death.' That is the spirit in which I expect you to approach this resolution. A satyagrahi knows no defeat.

"Nor would I expect a satyagrahi to say that whatever Englishmen do must be bad. The English are not necessarily bad. There are good men and bad men among the English people, as are among any other people. And we ourselves are not free from defects. The English people could not have risen to their present strength, if they had not some good in them. They have come and exploited India, because we quarrelled amongst ourselves and we allowed ourselves to be exploited. In God's world, unmixed evil never prospers. God rules even where Satan seems to hold sway, because the latter exists only on God's sufferance. Some people say that satyagraha is of no avail against a person who has no moral sense. I join issue with that. The stoniest heart must melt, if we are true and have enough patience. A satyagrahi lays down his life, but never gives up. That is the meaning of the 'do or die' slogan. That slogan does not mean 'kill or be killed'. That would be wilful distortion and a travesty of its true meaning. The true meaning is that we must do our duty and die in the course of performing it, if necessary. To die without killing is the badge of a satyagrahi. If we had lived upto that ideal we would have won swaraj by now. But our ahimsa was lame. It

walked on crutches. And even so it has brought us to our present strength. I know what happened in 1942. You will perhaps say that it was the sabotage and the underground activity that had brought the country to its present strength. It cannot be denied that the sabotage activity was carried on in the name of the Congress during the '42 struggle, but I deny *in toto* that the strength of the masses is due to that. Whatever strength the masses have, is due entirely to ahimsa, however imperfect or defective its practice might have been. Our ahimsa was imperfect, because we were imperfect, because it was presented to you by an imperfect being like myself. If then, even in the hands of imperfect instruments it could produce such results, what could it not achieve in the hands of a perfect satyagrahi?

"In 1942, our people showed great valour. But greater valour will be required of us before our goal is reached. We have done much, but more remains to be done. For that, we must have patience and humility and detachment. You should now try to understand what happened in 1942, the inner meaning of that struggle and the reason why it stopped short where it did.

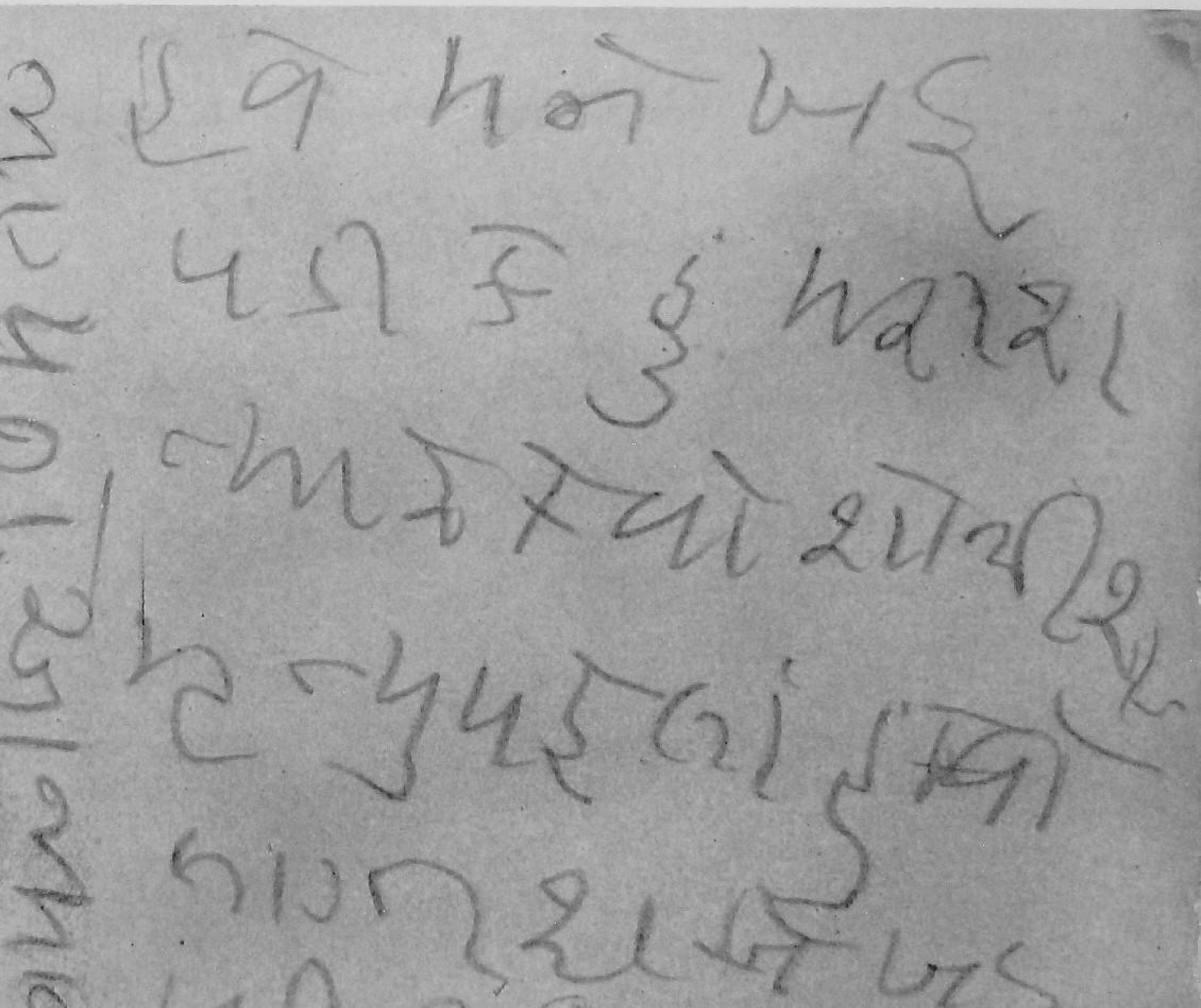
"This is no time for dalliance or ease. I told Jawaharlal Nehru that he must wear the crown of thorns for the sake of the nation and he has agreed. The constituent assembly is going to be no bed of roses for you, but only a bed of thorns. You may not shirk it.

"That does not mean that everybody should want to go into it. Only those should go there, who are fitted for the task by virtue of their legal training or special talent. It is not a prize to be sought as a reward for sacrifices, but a duty to be faced, even like mounting the gallows or sacrifice of one's all at the altar of service.

"There is one more reason why you should join the constituent assembly. If you asked me whether in the event of your rejecting the proposed constituent assembly or the constituent assembly failing to materialize, I would advise the people to launch civil disobedience, individual or mass, or undertake a fast myself, my reply is 'No'. I believe in walking alone. I came alone in this world, I have walked alone in the valley of the shadow of death, and I shall quit alone, when the time comes. I know that I am quite capable of launching satyagraha, even if I am all alone. I have done so before. But this is no occasion for a fast or civil disobedience. I regard the proposed constituent assembly as the substitute of satyagraha. It is constructive satyagraha.

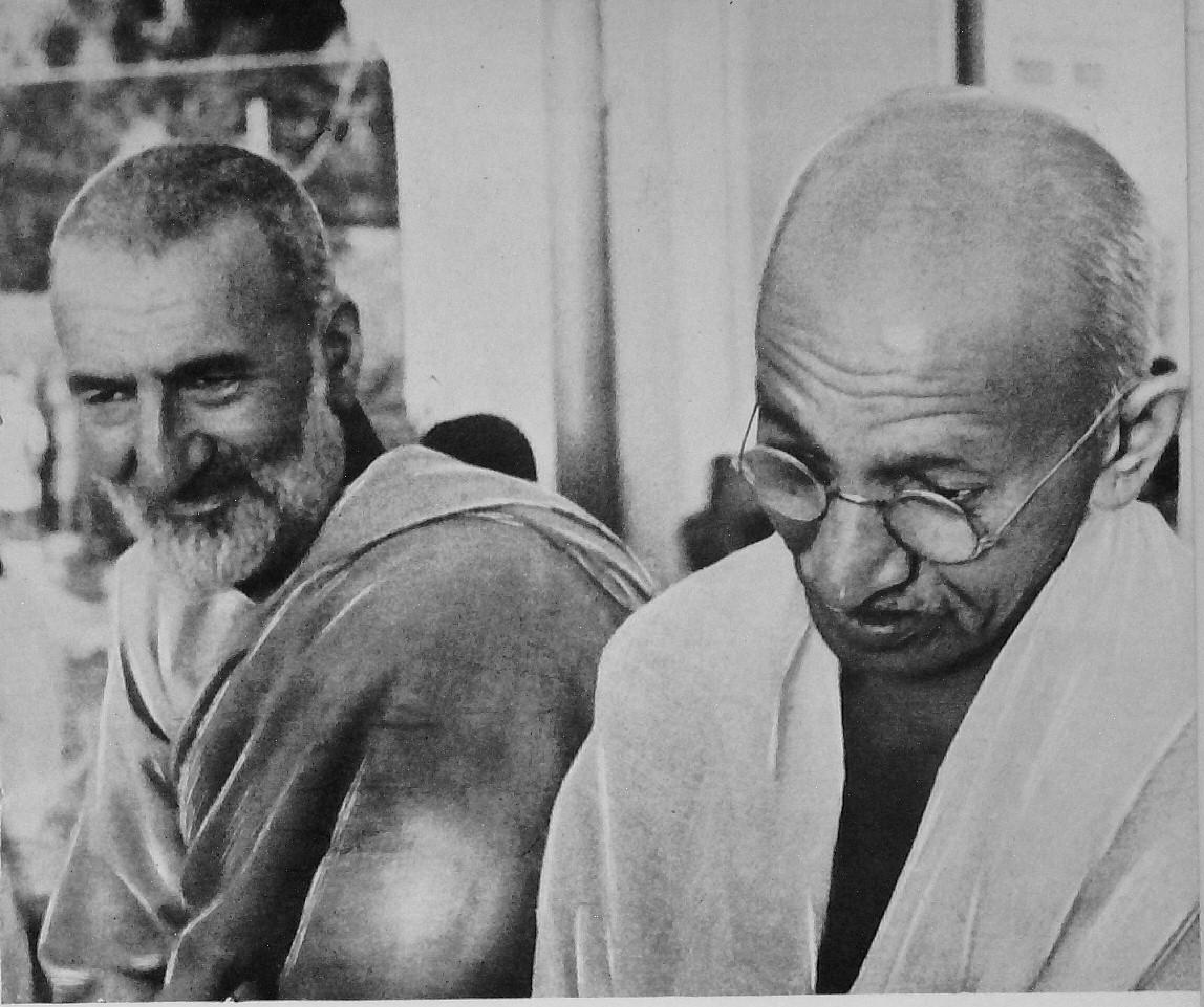
*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

At a prayer meeting in Mussoori, June 1946



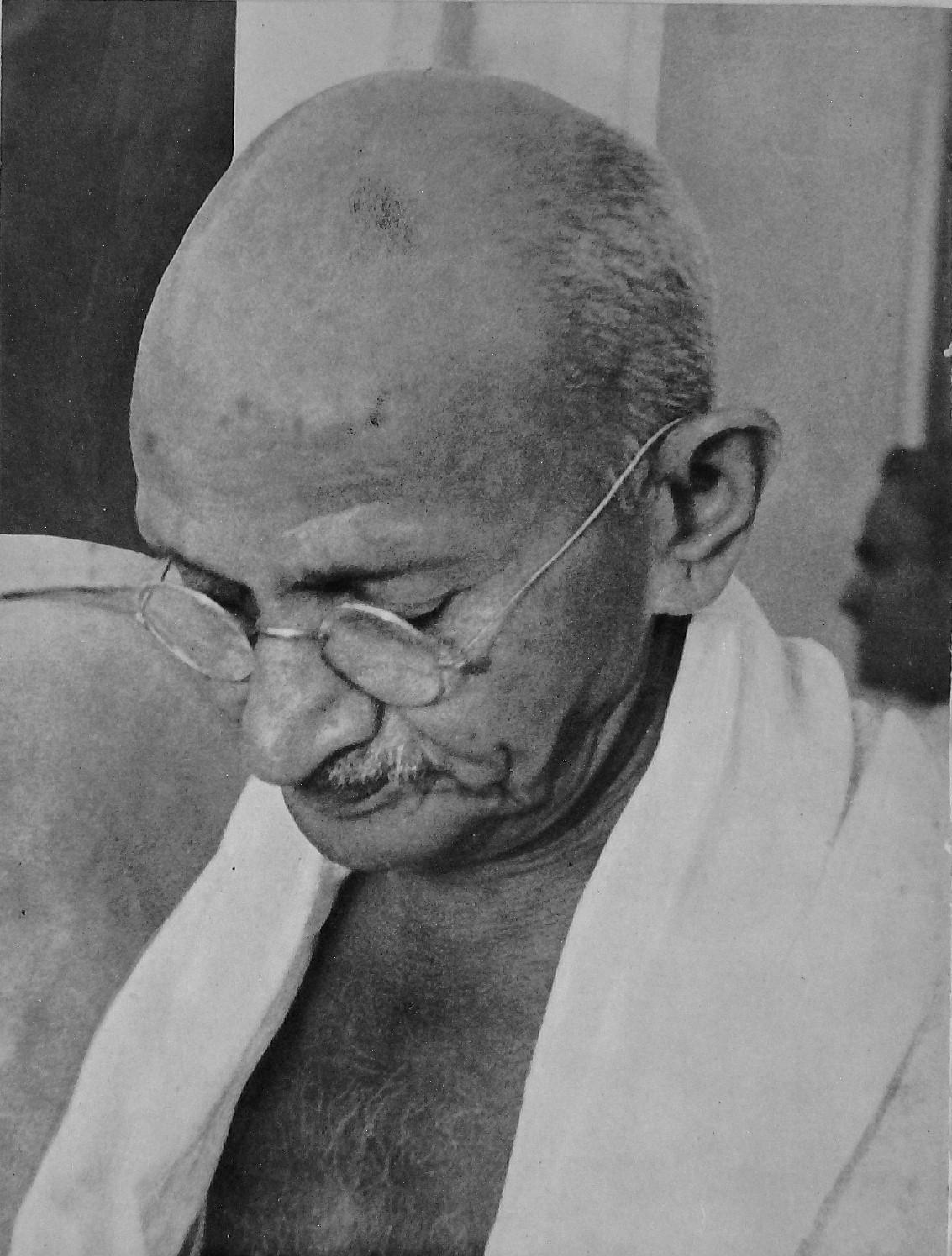
*Photograph : Udit Gopal*

During his journey to Poona in the night of June 29, 1946, when the train met with an accident. Gandhi's own remarks on the picture : " I see here how I will look after my death."



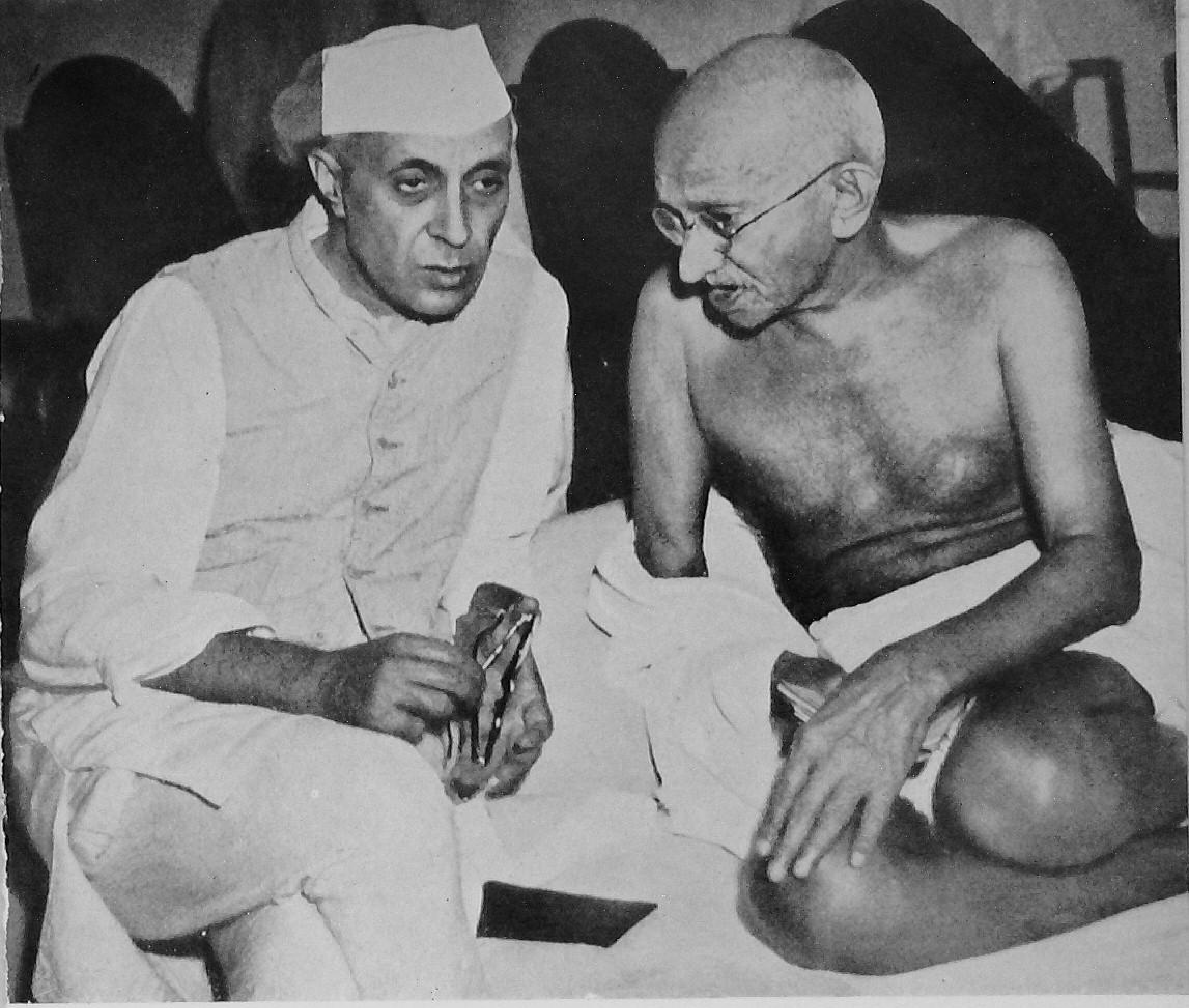
*Photograph : D. R. D. Wadia*

With Ghaffar Khan in Bombay, July 1946



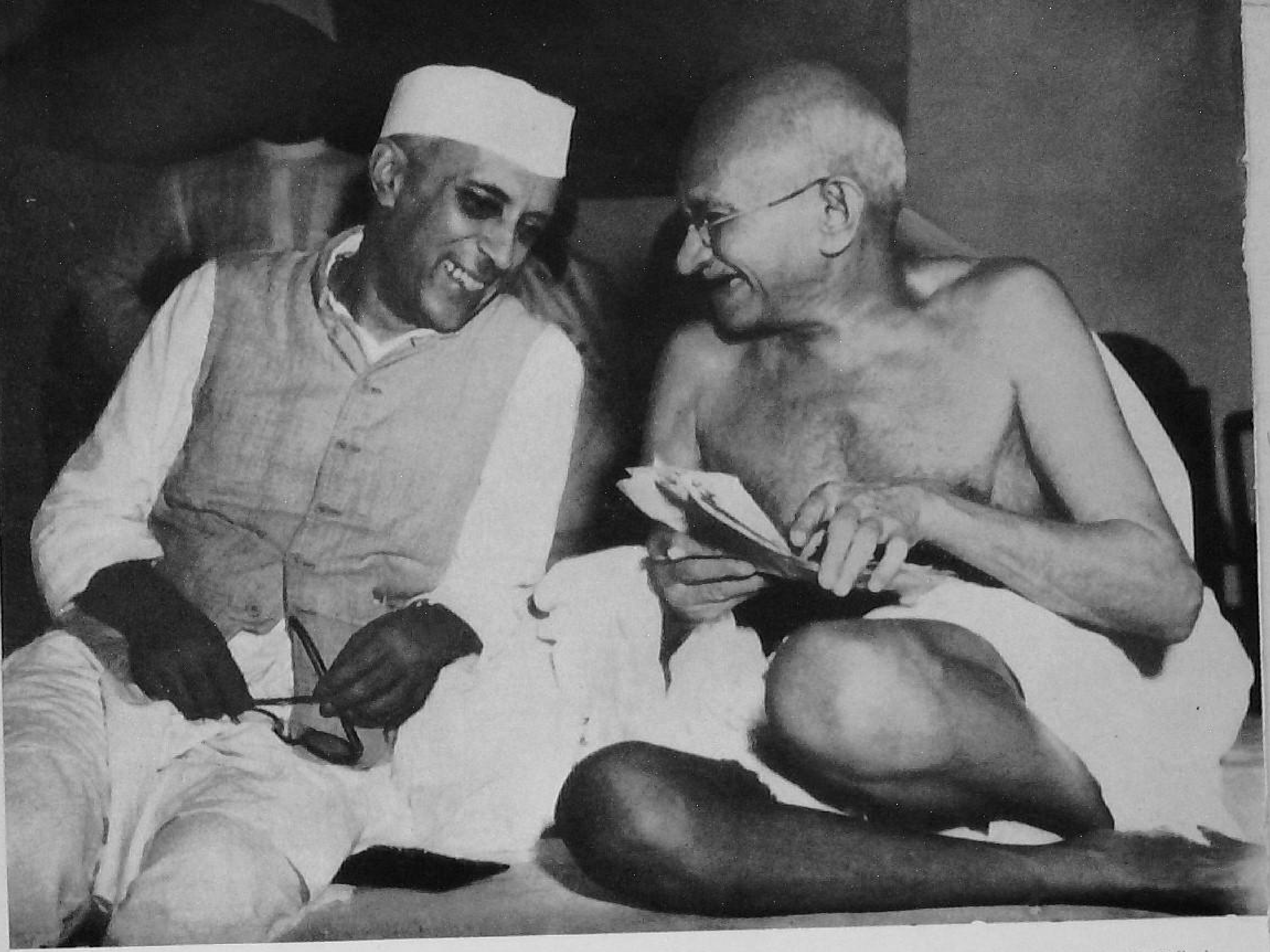
Photograph: D. R. D. Wadia

At a prayer meeting in Bombay, July 1946



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

With Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress President, at the A.-I.C.C. meeting in Bombay, July 6, 1946

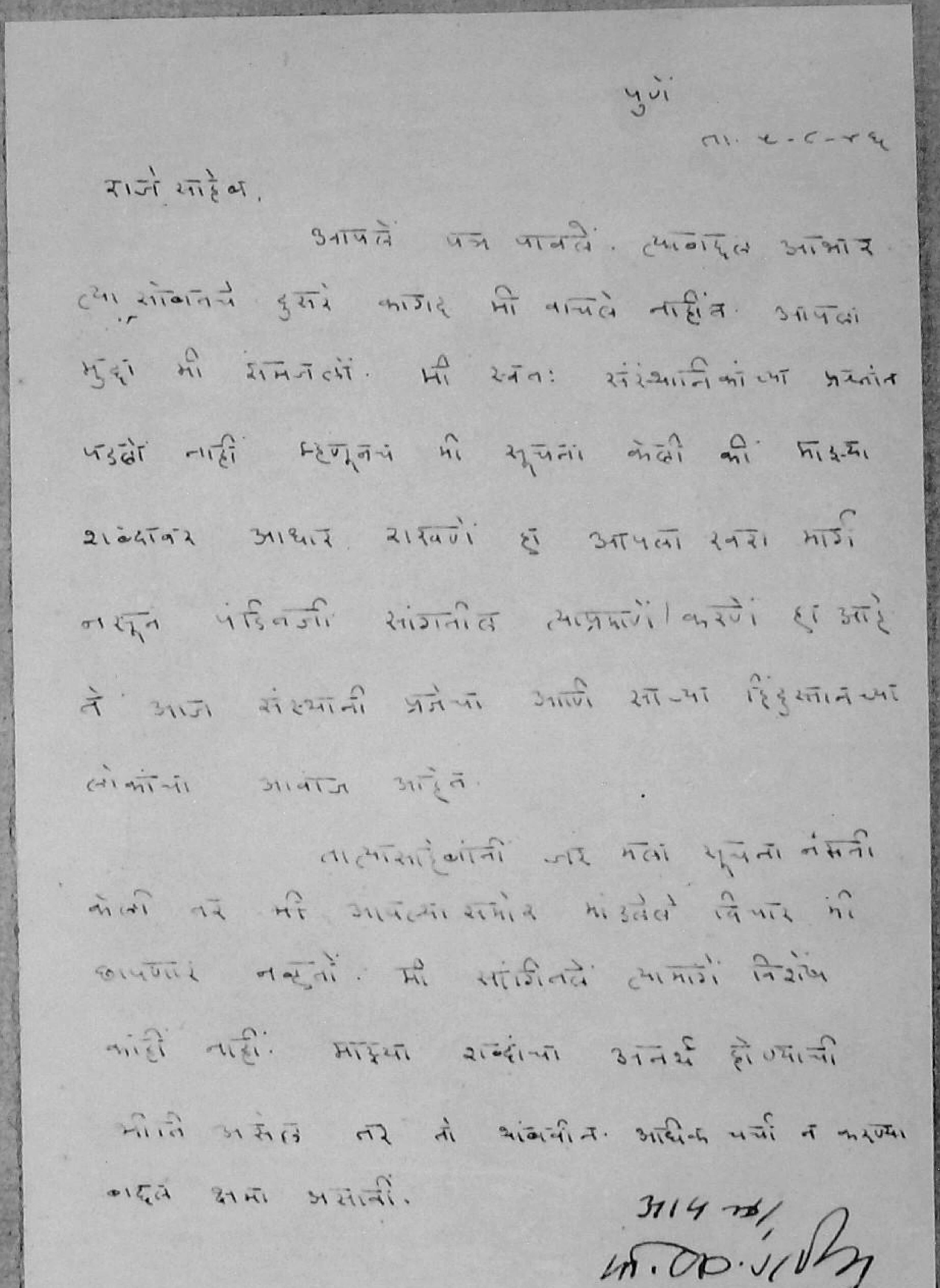


*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

At the A.-I.C.C. meeting in Bombay, July 1946

*Photograph : Central Camera Company*

Gandhi at the wheel during the A.-I.C.C. session, Bombay, July 1946



पुणें
ता. ५-८-४६

राजे साहेब,

आपलें पत्र पावलें. त्याबद्दल आभार.
त्या संबंधाचे दुसरे कागद मी वाचले नाहींत. आपला
मुद्दा मी समजलों. मी स्वतः संस्थानिकांच्या प्रकरणांत
पडलों नाहीं म्हणूनच मी सूचना केली कीं माझ्या
शब्दांवर आधार राखणें हा आपला खरा मार्ग
नसून पंडितजी सांगतील त्याप्रमाणें करणें हा आहे
ते आज संस्थानी प्रजेचा आणि साऱ्या हिंदुस्तानच्या
लोकांचा आवाज आहेत.

ताईसाहेबांनी जर मला सूचना नसती
केली तर मी आपल्यासमोर मांडलेले विचार मी
मांडणार नव्हतों. मी सांगितलें त्यामागें विशेष
कांहीं नाहीं. माझ्या शब्दांचा अनर्थ होण्याची
भीति असेल तर तो थांबवीत. आधीच चर्चा न करण्या
बद्दल क्षमा असावी.

आपला,
मो. क. गांधी

*Courtesy : M. Naik-Nimbalkar*

Gandhi's letter in Marathi addressed to the Chief of Phaltan, dated Poona, August 5, 1946

"The alternative is the constructive work, which you have never done justice to. If you had, you would have today got the constituent assembly of Jayaprakash's dream, instead of the present one. But a satyagrahi cannot wait or delay action, till perfect conditions are forthcoming. He will act with whatever material is at hand, purge it of dross and convert it into pure gold. Whatever may be the defects in the document of May 16, I have no doubt as to the honesty of those who framed it. They know they have got to quit. They want to quit in an orderly manner. And to that end, they have produced the document they could, under the circumstances. I refuse to believe that they came all the way from England to deceive us.

"A Polish lady has sent me a note just today saying that all the Europeans had received secret instructions to leave India, as British army would no longer be able to give them adequate protection. If it is so, it is a sad reflection on us. We would be unworthy of the name of satyagrahi, if even an English child did not feel secure in our midst. Even if we succeed in driving out the Europeans by these tactics, something worse will take their place. Our "Quit India" resolution has no malice about it. It only means that we will no longer be exploited.

"Let us not be cowardly, but approach our task with confidence and courage. Let not the fear of being deceived dismay us. No one can deceive a satyagrahi. Never mind the darkness that fills my mind. He will turn it into light."

On July 7, the A.-I.C.C. by a majority of 204 to 51 votes ratified the steps taken by the Congress High Command.

Gandhi pursued the subject of his speech in an editorial entitled "The Real Danger":

"As during the two days of the A.-I.C.C. session in Bombay I listened to some spirited speeches against the Congress Working Committee's resolution submitted to the A.-I.C.C. for ratification, I could not subscribe to the dangers portrayed by the opposition. No confirmed satyagrahi is dismayed by the dangers, seen or unseen, from his opponent's side. What he must fear, as every army must, is the danger from within.

"The opposition, however eloquent it may be, will defeat its purpose if it is not well informed, balanced and well based and does not promise action and result more attractive than what is opposed. Let the opposition at the late meeting answer.

"My purpose here is merely to point out the danger from within. The first in importance is laziness of mind and body. This comes out of the smug satisfaction that the Congressmen having suffered imprisonment have nothing more to do to win freedom and that a grateful organization should reward their service by giving them first preference in the matter of elections and offices. And so, there is an unseemly, vulgar competition for gaining what are described as prize posts. Here there is a double fallacy. Nothing should be considered a prize in the Congress dictionary, and imprisonment is its own reward. It is the preliminary examination of a satyagrahi. Its goal is the slaughter house, even as that of the spotless lamb. Jail going is, instead, being used as a passport to every office accessible to the Congress. Hence, there is every prospect of satyagrahi imprisonment becoming a degrading occupation like that of professional thieves and robbers. No wonder, my friends of the underground variety avoid imprisonment as being comparatively a bed of roses. This is a pointer to the pass, the Congress is coming to.

"The friends who opposed the resolution on the British Cabinet delegation's proposal do not seem to know what they are aiming at. Is independence to be bought at the price of a bloody revolution, as was, say, the French, the Soviet or even the English? Then frank and honest work has yet to begin. They have to tread a very dangerous path in openly making the Congress such an institution. My argument has no force, if subterranean activity is a doctrine of universal application and is now being employed against the Congress. The very thought repels me. I should hope for the sake of my own sanity that the thought is devoid of any foundation. Then it is clearly their duty to tell the Congressmen that now that there is Congress raj or representative raj, whether of the Congress variety or the Muslim League, they must set about reforming it in detail and not condemn it *in toto*. Total non-violent non-co-operation has no place in popular raj, whatever its level may be.

"Who is responsible for the mad orgy in Madura and, coming nearer, in Ahmedabad? It will be folly to attribute everything evil to British machinations. This senseless theory will perpetuate foreign domination, not necessarily British. The British will go in any case. The British want to go in an orderly manner, as is evident to me from the state paper, or they will go and leave India to her own fate assuming that India has forsaken the path of non-violence with

the certain result of a combined intervention of an assortment of the armed powers. Let the opposition say to the Congressmen what kind of independence they want. Congressmen in general certainly do not know the kind of independence they want. They recite the formula almost parrot-like. Or their notion of independence is fully expressed in saying that they mean by it Congress raj. And they will not be wrong. They have left further thinking to the Working Committee—a most undemocratic way. In true democracy, every man and woman is taught to think for himself or for herself. How this real revolution can be brought about I do not know, except that every reform, like charity, must begin at home.

"If then the constituent assembly fizzles out, it will not be because the British are wicked every time. It will be because we are fools or, shall I say, even wicked? Whether we are fools or wicked or both, I am quite clear that we must look for danger from within, not fear the danger from without. The first corrodes the soul, the second polishes."

"It is the primary duty of those in authority to improve the sanitary conditions of the chawls," Gandhi remarked in the last prayer gathering which he addressed in Bombay. "And if the municipality fails in its duty, it is then the right of the people to demand redress even by offering satyagraha. The owners of the chawls and the overseers and the managing staff should all try to do their utmost to rectify the wrong."

Gandhi felt ashamed and hurt to find that his residence was being guarded by the police, day and night. It should be a matter of shame for them also, he said. People should tell the police that he was their charge and that they would look after him. The Harijans had a cause to feel bitter against the Caste Hindus and, therefore, against him too, though he had become a bhangi. If the Harijans were angry with him and visited their anger upon him, he would feel no rancour against them. He had been doing his utmost to explain to the Caste Hindus and to the Harijans their respective duties. The Harijans, however, could well feel bitter against him, because with all his efforts, untouchability had not disappeared root and branch. When he came again, he would expect to find cleanliness all round and not merely in his rooms. And he would like to do without the police protection. He had no desire to become a burden to them, the dwellers in the chawls.

A printed leaflet was thrown into Gandhi's car, as he was driving to the A.-I.C.C. meeting in Bombay. It was again handed to him on the 12th. It was addressed to the members of the A.-I.C.C. He dealt with the questions of the leaflet in *Harijan*:

Question: "What is going to be the place of the untouchables in your swaraj? The Congress has talked a lot about protecting the rights of the minorities. Why has the Congress failed to produce its blue-print of the plan for protecting the minorities? Is this silence not calculated to create want of confidence in the bona fides of the Congress?"

Answer: "The place of the untouchables in the swaraj of my conception will be the same in every respect, as that of the so-called Caste Hindus. Such is also the view of the Congress. The Congress has talked less and has done more for the minorities than any other cosmopolitan body known to me. There is no blue-print necessary, when work speaks."

Question: "Does the Congress regard the untouchables as a minority? Mr. Gandhi in an article in *Harijan* in 1939 admitted that the only real minority in India were the untouchables. Why did the Maulana in his last letter to the Viceroy say that the Congress was not prepared to recognize the untouchables as a minority?"

Answer: "The Congress should not regard the untouchables as a minority for the simple reason that they are not a minority in the sense in which the Parsis, Jews, Christians and others can call themselves minorities. Harijans are a minority, if Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas are minorities and Shudras are a majority. These are not minorities and majorities in the sense we are used to. We have fortunately not come to that pass. When we do, it will be good-bye to any kind of swaraj. The English may go today, they will some day, but if we become savages cutting one another's throats, we will have the freedom that savages have. I have no recollection of ever having made the statement attributed to me. What Maulana Saheb is reported to have said was undoubtedly right, irrespective of what I wrote in 1939 or did not write."

Question: "What is the real significance of the statement that the Congress does not regard the untouchables as a minority? Does it mean that the Congress will take away even those political safeguards which have been secured by the untouchables under the present Government of India Act?"

Answer: "The significance is that the untouchables are an integral part of the Hindus. They are, therefore, better than minorities and worse if they claim to be and become a distinct community. A few educated untouchables may keep themselves as a class apart but the mass of untouchables must sink or swim with the Hindus who, if they continue their misbehaviour towards the Harijans, the so-called untouchables must become extinct as a separate branch of the human family.

"What 'political safeguards' the questioner has in view, I do not know. If he refers to 'separate' electorates, they must go, even to the extent they exist today. They are a device of Satan, named imperialism. It was never meant for the protection of the untouchables. It was a prop of British imperialism. Every statutory separation has been in furtherance of the policy of 'divide and rule'. It is inherent in the life of imperialism, even if it were to be called by a sweeter name."

Question: "Does the Congress admit that the candidates of the Scheduled Castes, who have been elected to the provincial legislatures, came to the bottom in the primary elections and candidates put up by the Scheduled Castes Federation came to the top? Does the Congress admit or does it not admit that if in the final election the failed candidates were elected, it was entirely due to the Hindu votes? Can it deny that candidates elected by Hindu votes can't be regarded as the real representatives of the Scheduled Castes?"

Answer: "I have not the statistics to verify the statement. My impression is to the contrary, except in some cases.

"Who were the 'failed' candidates? They could not offer themselves for the joint vote. The first four in the primary elections are successful candidates, that is, eligible for the joint vote. Surely it is a thing to be proud of, if the last successful candidate in primary list won because of the Caste Hindu vote at the joint election.

"The Congress must deny that the top man at the primary election who failed to secure enough or any Caste Hindu votes was the real representative of the Scheduled Castes. Can Shri Gaekwad and the others like him, so long as they are Hindus, be indifferent to the vote of their fellow Hindus, even though the latter are caste men? They must not cut the branch on which they are sitting. The separation must mean either change of religion or setting up a new religion—confusion added to confusion."

Question: "At the time of the Poona Pact, Mr. Gandhi gave a pledge that the Caste Hindus will not interfere in the selection of the Scheduled Castes to the seats reserved for them. Why did then the Congress violate the pledge and commit breach of faith?"

Answer: "I gave no such pledge as is imputed to me. The joint vote for the sake of which I fasted was interference, if it can be so called. If any other interference is meant, the questioner must explain and quote my writing in support of the contention."

Question: "In the first Simla conference called by Lord Wavell in 1945, the Congress raised no objection to two representatives of the Scheduled Castes being included in the Executive Council. Why did the Congress reduce the representation of the Scheduled Castes this time to one? Does this not prove that the Congress cannot be trusted to keep its word and that as soon as the Congress obtains the right to decide, it will break all its promises and withdraw all the political safeguards secured by the Scheduled Castes?"

Answer: "I do not understand this charge at all. The Congress, so far as I know, has committed no breach of faith."

Question: "It has been admitted by the workers of Harijan Sevak Sangh and also by Mr. Gandhi that the removal of untouchability has made no headway at all. On the contrary, the tyranny and the oppression of the untouchables by the Caste Hindus, which has been going on for ages, has increased in rigour and has taken manifold forms. It is necessary to ventilate these grievances on the floor of the legislatures, if any redress is to be obtained. No sensible man will deny that this work cannot be done except by the representatives of the Scheduled Castes, who are duly returned through separate electorates. Why does the Congress alone oppose the demand of the Scheduled Castes for separate electorates?"

Answer: "I have made no statement, and I do not know that Harijan Sevak Sangh has, to the effect that removal of untouchability has made 'no headway at all'. What all of us have admitted is that the removal, so far as the Caste Hindus are concerned, has made no satisfactory headway. That is not a new complaint. It is of long standing. Woe to the reformer who is easily satisfied with the progress of the reform, on which his mind is set. The reform is two-sided. So far as work among the Harijans is concerned, the sangh has made fair strides. That in itself is no small contribution to the cause of removal of untouchability. Work among the touchables has

gone on at a snail's pace. It is an uphill task. Yet I assert that it is making sure progress, though undoubtedly slow.

"The charge that the tyranny and oppression by the Caste Hindus have 'increased and have become intensified in rigour' is wholly wrong and cannot be sustained. What is true, and it is a healthy sign, is that there is a growing consciousness of the wrong among the Harijans, thanks largely to the efforts and the increase in the number of reformers and their impatience of the wrong. But they dare not be satisfied with the results so far achieved. They have to go much farther than they have done. I am sure that will never be through the legislatures or legislation, necessary as both are, though to a very limited extent. As I have said in a previous issue, it is the hoary custom, and not the law, that is responsible for the mischief. Custom is any day tougher than law. It can be removed only by enlightened public opinion.

"Progress will be totally blocked by separation. It is a nightmare which must be given up, unless the goal of separation is extinction of Hindus including the so-called Scheduled Classes. They can only be misrepresented by separate electorates. How can others who are not interested in Scheduled Classes oppose separation?"

Question: "There is no connection between the religion of a particular community and its demand for the separate electorates. Even the communities professing one religion have claimed separate electorates. Europeans, Anglo-Indians and the Indian Christians profess one common religion. And yet, all of them have separate electorates. Nobody has raised any objection to their separate electorates, not even the Congress. Why does the Congress oppose the demand of the Scheduled Castes for separate electorates on the ground of common religion, which it does not rely upon in other cases?"

Answer: "This question can only arise in the minds of those who support the separate electorates as good in themselves. Not so the Congress. The parallel of Anglo-Indians, Europeans and the Indian Christians is not applicable and is fatal. That separation is a glaring example of the mischief that the separate electorates are, as also of imperialism gone mad. Arrogance cannot go farther. The Europeans have been separated as the ruling race. The Anglo-Indians being a cross-breed have been kept distinct from Indian Christians."

Question: "There is no social separation between the Hindus and Sikhs. In one family, one member is a Sikh and the other a Hindu.

The Hindus and the Sikhs intermarry and inter-dine. Yet the Sikhs have separate electorates to which the Congress has never raised any objection. The untouchables, in the matter of social intercourse, are far more separated from the Hindus, than all the Sikhs and Muslims. If the Sikhs and the Muslims can have separate electorates, why not the untouchables?"

Answer: "The Congress would do away today with these separate electorates, if it had the power, not the power that the sword gives, but that of persuasion. It is perfectly true that more is common between Hindus and Sikhs than between Caste Hindus and untouchables. That is a blot upon the Caste Hindus and Hinduism. But the remedy is not to add evil to evil, but to reform Hinduism, so that the demand for separation on the part of untouchables dies a natural death. In the meantime, the Hindus cannot be expected to commit suicide which the separation of Harijans from Caste Hindus must mean."

In support of the marriages between the Caste Hindus and the untouchables, Gandhi wrote:

"Even if one Harijan girl marries a Caste Hindu with a high character, it will do good to both Harijans and Caste Hindus. They will set up a good precedent and if the Harijan girl is really worthy, she will spread her fragrance far and wide and encourage others to copy her example. The society will cease to be scared by such marriages. They will see for themselves that there is nothing wrong in them. If children born of such a union turn out to be good, they will further help to remove untouchability. Every reform moves at the proverbial snail's pace. To be dissatisfied with this slowness of progress betrays ignorance of the way in which reform works.

"It is certainly desirable that the Caste Hindu girls should select Harijan husbands. I hesitate to say that it is better. That would imply that women are inferior to men. I know that such an inferiority complex is there today. For this reason, I would agree that at present the marriage of a Caste Hindu girl to a Harijan is better than that of a Harijan girl to a Caste Hindu. If I had my way, I would persuade all Caste Hindu girls coming under my influence to select Harijan husbands. That it is most difficult I know from experience. The old prejudices are difficult to shed. One cannot afford to laugh at such prejudices either. They have to be overcome with patience. And if a girl imagines that her duty ends by marrying a Harijan,

and falls a prey to the temptation of self-indulgence after marriage, the last state would be worse than the first. The final test of every marriage is how far it develops the spirit of service in the parties. Every mixed marriage will tend in varying degrees to remove the stigma attached to such marriages. Finally, there will be only one caste, known by the beautiful name bhangi, that is to say, the reformer or remover of all dirt. Let us all pray that such a happy day will dawn soon."

"Generous as you are towards us, may I assure myself and my community that the *mehetar* seats in the constituent assembly will not escape your notice," wrote a Harijan to Gandhi. He replied:

"The writer has paid me a left-handed compliment, and that perhaps, in order, to teach me how to express my love for the bhangi, otherwise known as *mehetar*. The writer is a discontented graduate, setting no example or a bad example to the bhangis. He has isolated himself from them, though he professes to represent them.

"He will certainly become my teacher, if he will be a graduate in the art of being a good bhangi. I very much fear that he does no scavenging himself, he does not know what scientific scavenging is. If he became an expert in the art of scavenging, his services would be wanted by all the cities of India. When bhangis really rise from the slumber of ages, they will successfully sweep the Augean stables everywhere and India will be a pattern of cleanliness and there will be in India no plague and other diseases, which are the descendants of filth and dirt.

"In the place where I am living in Bombay, my room and the adjoining lavatory are fairly clean, but I am in the midst of suffocating dirt. I have had no time to examine the tenements in front of me. They are as crowded and dirty, as the ones in the quarters where I was living in Delhi. Had my graduate fellow bhangi been an expert in the art, I would, without doubt, have requisitioned his services as my guide and helper.

"As it is, not only have I no use for him, I have to risk his displeasure by telling him that he should not think of the constituent assembly or other assemblies. Let those go to them who are wanted there. Instead of getting rid of the wretched caste mentality, he argues that any Harijan is not good enough for the purpose, but preference should be given to the *mehetar* caste. I suggest to him that it is a harmful method, doing no good to anybody.

"Anyway, the writer has expected the impossible from me. I am not made for these big institutions. I have never interested myself in the periodical assembly elections. I have not attended the Working Committee meetings where they make these selections. And what I know of the present selections is from newspapers. I have become a bhangi, because I think that that is the vocation of every Hindu, that the hoary institution of untouchability, as we know it today in its ugly shape, will die a decent death only when the Hindus will be casteless by becoming bhangis from the bottom of their hearts. That cannot be done by aspiring after the membership my correspondent has in view."

In a note entitled "A Tragic Phenomenon", Gandhi wrote:

"My post contains so many letters from persons who want to be in the constituent assembly, that it frightens me into the suspicion that, if these letters are an indication of the general feeling, the intelligentsia is more anxious about personal aggrandizement than about India's independence. And if I, though I have no connection with the applications of the candidates for elections, receive so many letters, how many more must the Working Committee members be receiving? The correspondents should know that I take no interest in these elections. I do not attend meetings at which these applications are considered and that I often only know from newspapers who have been elected. It is on rare occasions that my advice is sought as to the choice to be made. But I write this more to draw attention to the disease, of which these applications are a sign, than to warn my correspondents against building any expectation of my intervention. It is wrong to think communally in such elections, it is wrong to think that anyone is good enough for the constituent assembly, it is altogether wrong to think that the election carries any honour with it, it is a post of service if one is fitted for the labours and, lastly, it is wrong to regard the post as one for making a few rupees, while the assembly lasts. The constituent assembly should have such members only, who know something about constitutions all the world over, and above all, about the constitution that India's genius demands. It is debasing to think that true service consists in getting a seat in the assembly. True service lies outside. The field of service outside is limitless. In the fight for independence, the assembly, like the one in course of formation, has a place. Nevertheless it is a very small place and that too if we use it wisely and well;

certainly not, if there is a scramble for a seat in it. The scramble warrants the fear that it may become a hunting ground for the placeseekers. I am free to confess that a constituent assembly is the logical outcome of parliamentary activity. The labours of the late Deshbandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru opened my eyes to the fact that the parliamentary programme had a place in the national activity for independence. I strove hard against it. It is certainly inconsistent with pure non-co-operation. But pure non-co-operation never held the field. And what came into being also waned. Had there been universal non-co-operation of the non-violent type in the Congress ranks, there would have been no parliamentary programme. Non-violent non-co-operation with evil means co-operation with all that is good. Therefore, non-violent non-co-operation with a foreign government necessarily means an indigenous government based on non-violence. Had there been such complete non-co-operation, there would be swaraj today based on non-violence. But this never happened. In the circumstances, it would have been vain to struggle against what the nation had been familiar with and from which it could not be completely weaned. The parliamentary step having been taken, it would not have been proper to boycott the present effort. But that does not, can never mean, that there should be indecent competition for filling the seats in it. Let us recognize the limitations."

## *Meaning Of Independence*

1946

After ceaseless strain of activity for three months, Gandhi arrived at Panchgani on July 13, 1946. During the prayer discourse on the first day, he said:

"In the song that has just been sung, the world has been aptly described as the valley of sorrow and suffering. God alone enables us to brave it all. The poet, however, has proceeded to call this world an illusion and a dream. Joy, or what men call happiness, may be, as really is, a dream in the fleeting and transitory world, where everything is like a dissolving phantasmagoria. But we cannot dismiss the suffering of our fellow creatures as unreal, and thereby provide a moral alibi for ourselves. Even the dreams are true, while they last and to the sufferer, his suffering is a grim reality. Anyway, whether the world be real or unreal, we have certain duties in life which must be faced, understood and duly performed, while we are in this world."

On July 14, he wrote on "Jews and Palestine":

"Hitherto, I have refrained practically from saying anything public regarding the Jew-Arab controversy. I have done so for good reasons. That does not mean any want of interest in the question, but it does mean that I do not consider myself sufficiently equipped with knowledge for the purpose. For the same reason, I have tried to evade many world events. Without airing my views on them, I have enough irons in the fire. But four lines of a newspaper column have done the trick and evoked a letter from a friend who has sent me a cutting, which I would have missed but for the friend drawing my attention to it. It is true that I did say some such thing in the course of a long conversation with Mr. Louis Fischer on the subject. I do believe that the Jews have been cruelly wronged by the world. 'Ghetto' is, so far as I am aware, the name given to Jewish locations in many parts of Europe. But for their heartless persecution,

probably no question of return to Palestine would ever have arisen. The world should have been their home, if only for the sake of their distinguished contribution to it.

"But, in my opinion, they have erred grievously in seeking to impose themselves on Palestine with the aid of America and Britain and now with the aid of naked terrorism. Their citizenship of the world should have and would have made them the honoured guests of any country. Their thrift, their varied talent and their great industry should have made them welcome anywhere. It is a blot on the Christian world that they have been singled out, owing to a wrong reading of the New Testament, for prejudice against them. 'If an individual Jew does a wrong, the whole Jewish world is to blame for it.' If an individual Jew like Einstein makes a great discovery or another composes unsurpassable music, the merit goes to the authors and not to the community to which they belong.

"No wonder that my sympathy goes out to the Jews in their unenviably sad plight. But one would have thought, adversity would teach them lessons of peace. Why should they depend on American money or the British arms for forcing themselves on an unwelcome land? Why should they resort to terrorism to make good their forcible landing in Palestine? If the Jews were to adopt the matchless weapon of non-violence, whose use their best prophets have taught and which Jesus the Jew, who gladly wore the crown of thorns, bequeathed to a groaning world, their case would be the world's, and I have no doubt that among the many things that they have given to the world, this would be the best and the brightest. It is twice blessed. It will make them happy and rich in the true sense of the word and it will be a soothing balm to the aching world."

Thanks to the postal strike, there was some relief from the bulging daily mail bag during the first week of his stay at the hill-station. But during the second week, there was a steady stream of visitors who discussed with him some very important problems. Mr. Louis Fischer had three interviews with him on two successive days.

Mr. Fischer opened with a broadside on the question of the constituent assembly. "I would go into the constituent assembly and use it for a different purpose—as a battlefield—and declare it to be a sovereign body. What do you say to this?"

Gandhi replied: "It is no use declaring somebody else's creation a sovereign body," after all, that is a British creation. A body does

not become a sovereign body by merely asserting it. To become sovereign, you have to behave in a sovereign way. Three tailors of Tooley Street in Johannesburg declared that they were a sovereign body. It ended in nothing. It was just a farce.

"I do not consider the proposed constituent assembly to be non-revolutionary. I have said, and I do mean it cent percent, that the proposed constituent assembly is an effective substitute for civil disobedience of the constructive type. Whilst I have the greatest admiration for the self-denial and the spirit of sacrifice of our socialist friends, I have never concealed the sharp difference between their method and mine. They frankly believe in violence and all that is in its bosom. I believe in non-violence through and through."

That turned the discussion on to socialism. "You are a socialist and so are they," interpolated Mr. Fischer.

"I am, they are not," affirmed Gandhi. "I was a socialist before many of them were born. I carried conviction to a rabid socialist in Johannesburg, but that is neither here, nor there. My claim will live when their socialism is dead."

"What do you mean by your socialism?" asked Mr. Fischer.

"My socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably, these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius, if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body."

"Yes, but there are variations," said Mr. Fischer. "My socialism in its modified form means that the state does not own everything. It does in Russia. There you certainly do not own your body even. You may be arrested at any time, though you may have committed no crime. They may send you wherever they like."

"Does not under your socialism, the state own your children and educate them in any way it likes?" asked Gandhi.

"All states do that. America does it," said Mr. Fischer.

"Then America is not very different from Russia."

"You really object to dictatorship?" asked Mr. Fischer.

"But socialism is dictatorship or else arm-chair philosophy. I call myself a communist also," said Gandhi.

"Oh, don't," said Mr. Fischer. "It is terrible for you to call yourself a communist. I want what you want, what Jayaprakash and the socialists want, a free world. But the communists don't. They want a system which enslaves the body and the mind."

"Would you say that of Marx?" asked Gandhi.

"Communists have corrupted the Marxist teaching to suit their purpose," said Mr. Fischer.

"What about Lenin?" asked Gandhi.

"Lenin started it," said Mr. Fischer. "Stalin has since completed it. When the communists come to you, they want to get into the Congress and control it and use it for their own ends."

"So do the socialists. My communism is not very different from socialism. It is a harmonious blending of the two. Communism, as I have understood it, is a natural corollary of socialism."

"Yes, you are right," said Mr. Fischer. "There was a time, when the two could not be distinguished. But today the socialists are very different from communists."

"You mean to say that you do not want communism of Stalin's type," remarked Gandhi.

"But Indian communists want communism of the Stalin type in India and want to use your name for the purpose," said Mr. Fischer.

"They won't succeed," said Gandhi.

Mr. Fischer reverted to the constituent assembly. "So you won't yourself go into the constituent assembly, but will support it."

"Yes," said Gandhi. "But it is wrong to say we are going to the constituent assembly to seize power. Though it is not a sovereign body, it is near it as possible."

"Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said that if the British tried to impose a treaty in terms of the state paper of May 16, he will tear it up," put in Mr. Fischer.

"Yes, an imposed treaty from outside," affirmed Gandhi.

"Pandit Nehru said, the Congress will not go into groupings," added Mr. Fischer.

"Yes," asserted Gandhi. "I have said the same thing, unless the Federal Court or some other court gives a different decision. As I see it, much can come out of the constituent assembly, if the British will play the game."

"You say and, I believe, they will," remarked Mr. Fischer. "But supposing they do not, won't you then offer your form of protest?"

"Not until the conditions are favourable. But it is wrong to speculate about the future, still more so to anticipate failure. If we take care of the present, the future will take care of itself."

They then passed on to Hindu-Muslim problem. Gandhi startled Mr. Fischer by proffering the remark that in the final analysis, it was an offshoot of the untouchability question. "When Hinduism is perfectly reformed and purged of the last trace of untouchability, there will be no communal problem left."

"I have heard that though the Congress Harijans have won at the elections against non-Congress Harijans, they were able to do so only with the Hindu votes," remarked Mr. Fischer.

"What was the joint election for, if not to enable Caste Hindus to make a selection from the successful candidates at the primary elections?" asked Gandhi. "No failed candidate at the primary elections can offer himself as a candidate at the joint elections. Moreover, it is not correct to say, as has been claimed, that in majority of cases, the Congress Harijans won against the non-Congress candidates with Caste Hindu votes. In Madras, the non-Congress Harijans were defeated almost to a man in the primary elections, wherever they contested them. In the majority of cases the Congress Harijans were returned unopposed."

"Some of them want separate electorates," said Mr. Fischer.

"Yes," remarked Gandhi. "But we have resisted it. By separate electorates, they put themselves outside the pale of Hinduism and perpetuate the bar sinister."

"That is true," said Mr. Fischer. "But, anyhow, they might say that Hindus have put them outside the pale."

"But today the Hindus are penitent."

"Are they adequately penitent?" asked Mr. Fischer.

"I am sorry to say 'Not yet'. If they were, there would be no untouchability and no communal problem as I have already said."

"Is there less social contact between the Hindus and Muslims?" next asked Mr. Fischer.

"No, rather the contrary. But politically, there is a bar, thanks to Lord Minto," said Gandhi.

Mr. Fischer changed over to another topic. "Your young men are too Indo-centric," he said.

"That is only partly true," said Gandhi. "I will not say that we have become international, but we have taken up the forlorn causes,

the cause of exploited nations, because we are ourselves the chief exploited nation."

"The growing anti-white feeling here is bad," stated Mr. Fischer. "In the Taj Mahal Hotel they have put up a notice 'South Africans not admitted'. I do not like it. Your non-violence should make you more generous."

"That will not be non-violence," remarked Gandhi. "Today, the white man rules in India. So, if Taj Mahal has the gumption to put up that notice, it is a feather in its cap."

"That is what any nationalist will say. You must say something better," said Mr. Fischer.

"Then I will be a nationalist for once," said Gandhi with firmness. "They have no right to be here, if they don't deal with Indians on terms of equality."

"No right—yes," rejoined Mr. Fischer. "But you must give them more than their right. You must invite them."

"Yes, when I am the Viceroy," said Gandhi.

"You mean the President of Indian Republic," said Mr. Fischer.

"No," replied Gandhi. "I will be quite content to be the Viceroy, a constitutional Viceroy, for the time being. The first thing I will do will be to vacate the Viceregal Lodge and give it to the Harijans. I will then invite the South African white visitors to my hut and say to them, 'You have ground my people to powder. But we will not copy you. We will give you more than you deserve. We won't lynch you as you do in South Africa,' and thus shame them into doing the right."

"There is so much anti-white feeling today," put in Mr. Fischer.

"Of course, I am opposed to it. It can do no good to anybody," said Gandhi.

"The world is so divided. There might be another war and that may be between the coloured and white races," said Mr. Fischer.

"Europe seems to be heading for another war," said Gandhi. "It is not sufficiently exhausted."

"Europe is terribly exhausted," said Mr. Fischer. "But with the atom bomb, human beings don't matter so much. A few scientists are enough. The future war will be carried on by pressing a few buttons. That is why colour war is so dangerous."

"Anything is better than cowardice," said Gandhi. "It is violence double-distilled." To illustrate his remark, he narrated how a negro

clergyman with a Herculean frame said "pardon me brother", when insulted by a white man, and sneaked into a coloured man's compartment. "That is not non-violence. It is a travesty of Jesus' teaching. It would have been more manly to retaliate."

"You are not afraid of what happens to you but what it may mean to the others," said Mr. Fischer, analysing the illustration adduced by Gandhi. "It takes a great deal of irresponsibility to give vent to your feelings and slap the white man under the circumstances described by you. In India, the situation is different. The white men are not so numerous here."

"You are mistaken," observed Gandhi. "Why, one Englishman is killed and a whole village is razed to the ground as a reprisal. What vindictiveness!"

That finished the first day's discussion. The next day, Mr. Fischer reverted to the topic of the constituent assembly.

"If the Working Committee had reacted to your 'groping in the dark', or as you have called that your instinct about the long-term proposals, they would have rejected them," said Mr. Fischer.

"Yes, but I did not let them," said Gandhi.

"You mean you did not insist?" asked Mr. Fischer.

"More than that," he said. "I prevented them from following my instinct, unless they also felt likewise. It is no use conjecturing what would have happened. The fact remains that Rajendra Babu asked: 'Does your instinct go so far that you would prevent us from accepting the long-term proposals, whether we understand you or not?' I said: 'No. Follow your reason, since my own reason does not support my instinct. My instinct rebels against my reason. I have placed my misgivings before you, as I want to be faithful to you. I myself have not followed my instinct, unless my reason backed it.'"

"But you have said that you follow your instinct when it speaks to you on occasions as, for instance, you did before certain fasts that you undertook," remarked Mr. Fischer.

"Yes, but even in these cases, before the fast began, my reason was able to back my instinct. My reason failed my instinct on the long-term proposals," replied Gandhi.

Mr. Fischer asked, "Then, why did you inject your 'instinct' into the political situation?"

"Because I was loyal to my friends. I wanted to retain my faith in the bona fides of the Cabinet Mission. And so I told the Cabinet

Mission also about my misgivings. I said to myself, 'Supposing they meant ill, they would feel ashamed.' "

"You are strongly constitutionalist now. Is it for the fear of the alternative—violence?" asked Mr. Fischer.

"No. If India is destined to go through a blood bath, it will do so. The thing I would fear is my own cowardice or dishonesty. I have neither. So I say, we must go in and work it out. If they are dishonest, they will be found out. The loss will be theirs."

"I think you are afraid of the spirit of violence. It is widespread. I wonder whether it has not captured the mood of the youth and you are aware of it and you fear that mood," said Mr. Fischer.

"It has not captured the imagination of the country. I admit it has captured the imagination of a section of the youth."

"It is a mood that has got to be combated," said Mr. Fischer.

"Yes. I am doing it in my own way. It is my implicit faith that it is a survival which will kill itself in time. It cannot live. It is so contrary to the spirit of India. But what is the use of talking? I believe in an inscrutable Providence which presides over our destinies—call it God, or by any other name you like. All I contend is that it is not the fear of violence that makes me advise the country to go to the constituent assembly. It is repugnant in a non-violent attitude not to accept an honourable substitute for civil revolt."

On July 21, Gandhi had the satisfaction of seeing the materialization of one of his pet projects, when Sheth Shantilal of Ahmedabad formally dedicated "Satish Kunj" property for the use of the poor. Speaking after the evening prayer, Gandhi said that when he came to Panchgani under medical advice in 1944, he found that there was no place where the poor and the destitute could put up, in order to take advantage of the beautiful climate. And what about Harijans? He had received a long letter from one of them describing their woes. "It is all right, so long as his identity is unknown. But the moment it is discovered that he is a Harijan, he suddenly becomes a *pariah*. He is unwelcome everywhere. All doors are shut against him. The shopkeeper receives his money but sells him the rottenest stuff, and cheats him into the bargain, by giving him less than the full measure. Should the poor unfortunate object, he is, insulted and told to be gone! The landlord will not have him and will ask him to quit. Where is the poor man to go?" It was heart-rending. He felt he could not come and stay in Panchgani, unless

there was a place where Harijans would be welcome like all others. It had, therefore, given him great pleasure that Panchgani was at last going to have such a place. Sheth Shantilal of Ahmedabad had purchased the "Satish Kunj" property for Rs. 45,000 and he had agreed to get it reconditioned and bear the running expenses of the institution for ten years. In the dharmashala, which was going to be built, the poor of all communities, including Harijans, would be able to come and stay, without any distinction of caste or religion. They would be provided free accommodation, but they would have to make their own arrangements, as regards food, etc. A trust had been formed to look after the dharmashala. He would have liked the dharmashala to be built out of funds, provided by the inhabitants of Panchgani itself. But finance was not everything. Although the public had not contributed the money, they should give their blessings and co-operation. The institution would fail, unless the people took active and genuine interest in it. He suggested that the women from the well-to-do families should visit the sick or the convalescent, who might come to the dharmashala for a change of climate, soothe them by singing beautiful hymns and render them whatever service they could or was necessary.

The sanitary conditions in Panchgani were awful. In a climate like theirs, there should never be any epidemics. Yet they had the plague only the year before and they had to vacate the bazar which was indescribably dirty. Then there was water shortage, in spite of a plentiful rainfall. Why could not the rain water be captured and utilized for the water-supply? In South Africa, where rainfall was scarce and there was a dearth of underground water-supply, they had a reservoir in every house for storing the rain water. It was the duty of all of them, and most of all the municipality and the Public Health Department, to remedy these defects. Chief Minister Kher was there and he was prepared to render them whatever help was necessary. If he were the Health Officer or the Chairman of the Panchgani Municipality, said Gandhi, he would make the place so clean and neat that anybody might be able to lie down and sleep on the hill-side in the open, without any compunction. Today that was not possible, because of municipal insanitation. The people spat and made nuisance here, there, and everywhere, indiscriminately. He spoke from knowledge, he affirmed. Before he came under the mahatmic handicap and was free to go into dharmashala and other

places of public utility without attracting crowds, he had occasion to study the conditions prevailing in those places. The insanitation, the filth and the stench of the public latrines and the urinals of the railway stations and in the dharmashalas were simply awful. The people could make Panchgani into a jewel among the hill-stations, if only they did their duty.

He then proceeded to make some concrete suggestions. The first and the foremost, of course, was sanitation and night-soil disposal. Having become a bhangi himself, he thought of this first. He had done a bhangi's job, right from South Africa. He knew how to do it, without becoming filthy himself. The sight of a bhangi carrying the night-soil basket on his head made him sick. Scavenging was a fine art. Not only must the cleaning be perfect, but the manner of doing it and instruments used, must be clean and not revolting to one's sanitary sense. "You have only to see the privy I use. It is spotlessly clean without a trace of smell. That is so, because I clean it myself. The municipal bhangi pours out the contents of the night-soil waggons over a cliff, converting a beauty-spot into a plague-spot. If you become your own bhangis, not only will you insure the perfect sanitation for yourself, but you will make your surroundings clean and relieve the bhangis of the weight of oppression, which today crushes them. Do not imagine, that thereby you would deprive them of their living. Today, we have reduced the bhangis to the level of the beast. They earn a few coppers, but only at the expense of their human dignity. The same bhangi serves in the municipality as well as in your bungalow, with the result that he can do justice to neither. Look at him as he eats his food, cowering under the shadow of the latrine wall, surrounded by filth. It is enough to break one's heart. It should not be difficult for you to find a more decent avocation for him to follow."

The Nawab Saheb of Wai who had seen him earlier in the day had told him that he knew what to do, but that the municipality was too poor and the necessary finances were lacking. Gandhi had asked the Nawab Saheb to send him a short note setting forth their handicap. He hoped to be able to show him that what they wanted to do and what needed to be done, need not be held up for lack of funds. After all, the various improvements which he suggested would not require more than ten lakhs of rupees. He wanted to tell the rich folk who frequented Panchgani that it was up to them to

provide that amount. In free and progressive countries, the gentry considered it their special privilege and their duty to shoulder the burden of providing municipal amenities and improvements. It was only in India that the people looked for every little thing to the Government. They must learn to shed that mendicant habit, if they aspired to become a free and self-respecting nation.

Then they should do something to improve the drainage. For that a suitable scheme would have to be prepared by an engineer. He hoped that the work would be taken up without delay.

The prayer meetings were held in the hall of Parsi Girls' High School. The prayer was preceded by the singing of a verse from the Zend-Avesta by the girl students of the school, followed by a song in Gujarati. These provided the texts to Gandhi for his prayer discourses. Sometimes the foreign or the Indian news served as a peg on which to hang the lesson of the prayer or to illustrate its meaning or application.

Referring to the riots in Ahmedabad, he said that Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad had not yet got over their insanity. Islam meant peace. Hindus claimed to follow the path of ahimsa. They both swore by God, but, in practice, followed Satan. The Muslim stabbed the innocent Hindu, and the Hindu stabbed the innocent Muslim. Among the three workers who were killed in Ahmedabad some days ago, one was a Muslim. It was a Muslim's dagger that killed him. He was in the company of Hindus. No one even knew that he was a Muslim. One of his companions Vasantrao was well known to and commanded respect of both Hindus and Muslims. While in jail, one of his Muslim companions went on the fast. There was an overwhelming majority of Hindus amongst the satyagrahi prisoners. Vasantrao felt that he ought to give his moral support to the Muslim brother and he went on a sympathetic fast. His senior companions in jail tried to dissuade him. "Are you wiser than all of us? You know the Muslim friend's fast is not justified. If it was, we would all have fasted with him." His reply was: "I do not claim to be wise. I prefer to be a fool. I seek your blessings. If this Muslim friend dies in jail in the midst of all of us Hindus, with what face shall I return to my Muslim friends outside? Therefore, I would far rather die with him, whatever the issue of his fast." Neither died in the end, but Vasantrao proved by his action, that he was a true Hindu and a true Muslim combined into one.

He concluded by exhorting the audience to cultivate that mentality. He was certain that if they prayed to God to restore to sanity the Hindus and the Muslims of Ahmedabad, their prayer would not go unheeded, but leap across space and melt the hearts of the deluded rioters in Ahmedabad.

Gandhi pursued this subject in an article dated July 22:

"Butchery has been going on in Ahmedabad for several days. It is difficult to say who is at fault. The policy of the Government is not to let the public know as to who has knifed whom. The Congress Government has adhered to this policy. So we should believe that there is good reason behind this hush hush. It may be that this is on a par with a thief's mother, feigning grief over her son's theft. In Ahmedabad, everyone must know who is the aggressor or who is more at fault. My job is not to find that out. Mine is comparatively easier work.

"The golden path is that one of the parties to mutual slaughter should desist. Then alone can true peace be established and madness come to an end. In my childhood, I and a cousin of mine took *bhang* and, like two mad men, we went on laughing at each other. When the intoxication was over on the following morning, we were ashamed of ourselves and we could not face each other. The above incident was harmless in comparison. What is now taking place in Ahmedabad is frightful.

"Is it not enough that three young men have laid down their lives in the attempt to put down the flames? I spoke about it at the prayer meeting at Poona. Several friends have written to me about these three martyrs. If we were wise, these sacrifices would have quenched the fire. But that has not happened. It does not mean that the sacrifices have gone in vain. It only means that many more are necessary to extinguish such flames.

"Another alternative is that both must exhaust themselves; they must face police bullets. Some may be sent to jail and some mount the gallows, before peace is restored. This is the wrong way. Fire put out in this fashion is bound to flare up again. This process does not reduce the poison. It is simply suppressed. It spreads through the whole body and causes more mischief.

"Peace restored with the help of the police and its elder brother the military will strengthen the hold of the foreign government and emasculate us still further. Iqbal has written the immortal line:

'Religion does not inculcate mutual strife.' Can there be a greater proof of our cowardice than fighting amongst ourselves?

"There is a method about everything—even mutual fight. If we must fight, why should we seek the help of the police and military? The Government should clearly say that the military, whilst it is in India, will only be used for maintaining cleanliness, cultivating unused land and the like. The police will be used to catch bona fide thieves. Neither will be used to put down communal riots.

"Let Ahmedabad folk be brave enough to eschew the help of the police and the military, let them not be cowards. Rioters are mostly hooligans, who do their nefarious deeds in the dark. I am told that most of the stabbings have been in the back. Seldom or never have they been in the chest. Why should one be frightened of such people? One should rather brave death at their hands, in the hope that the sacrifice will bring them to sanity. But if one has not the requisite courage to face death, one must defend oneself by putting up a fight. The question may be asked as to how one should fight against those who stab you unawares from behind. It may not be possible to prevent such stabbing, but if the onlookers are not in collusion with evil-doers and are not devoid of courage, they will catch hold of the culprit and hand him over to the police or to community to which he belongs. Or, they can bring him before the panchayat. Only they may not take the law into their own hands."

In the same issue of *Harijan*, he wrote on "Independence":

"Question: You have said in your article in *Harijan* of July 15, under the caption 'The Real Danger', that Congressmen in general certainly do not know the kind of independence they want. Would you kindly give them a broad but a comprehensive picture of the independent India of your own conception?

"Answer: I do not know that I have not, from time to time, given my idea of independence. Since, however, this question is part of a series, it is better to answer it even at the risk of repetition.

"Independence of India should mean independence of the whole of India, including what is called India of the states and the other foreign powers, French and Portuguese, who are there, I presume, by British sufferance. Independence must mean that of the people of India, not of those who are today ruling over them. The rulers should depend on the will of those who are under their heels. Thus, they have to be servants of the people, ready to do their will.

"Indian independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or panchayat, having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. But this does not exclude dependence on the willing help from the neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that the others cannot have with equal labour.

"This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living force which inheres every other force known to the world, and which depends on none, and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life, without belief in this all-embracing living light.

"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But, it will be an oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

"Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and will derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by any human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture, in which the last is equal to the first, or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

"In this picture, every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots, which are deep down in the bowels of earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

"In it, there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's Sewing Machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.

"Question: You believe that the proposed constituent assembly could be used for the realization of your picture?

"Answer: The proposed constituent assembly has all possibilities for the realization of my picture. Yet I cannot hope for much, not because the state paper holds no such possibilities, but because the document, being wholly of a voluntary nature, requires the common consent of the many parties to it. These have no common goal. The Congressmen themselves are not of one mind, even on the contents of independence. I do not know how many swear by non-violence or the charkha, or, believing in decentralization, regard the village as the nucleus. I know on the contrary that many would have India become a first-class military power and wish for India to have a strong centre and build the whole structure round it. In the medley of these conflicts, I know that if India is to be the leader in clean action based on clean thought, God will confound the wisdom of these big men and will provide the villages with the power to express themselves as they should.

"Question: If the constituent assembly fizzles out because of the 'danger from within', as you have remarked in the above-mentioned article, would you advise the Congress to accept the alternative of a general country-wide strike and the capture of power, either non-violently or with the use of force? What is your alternative in that eventuality, if the above is not approved by you?

"Answer: I must not contemplate darkness, before it stares me in the face. In no case, can I be party, irrespective of non-violence, to a universal strike and the capture of power. Though, therefore, I do not know what I should do in the case of a breakdown, I know that the actuality will find me ready with some alternative. My sole

reliance being on the living power, which we call God, He will put the alternative in my hand, when the time has come, not a minute sooner."

On July 27, Gandhi wrote an editorial on "9th August":

"The 9th August, like 6th April, 13th April and 26th January, is a red-letter day in the battle of India's freedom. These are days for universal hartal in terms of satyagraha, that is, truth and non-violence. But, today, considered in terms of satyagraha, hartals are taboo and more specially so, on the coming 9th of August. They would be fitting, if hartals are designed to signalize violence.

"Two powerful voices have spoken: one of the President of the Congress, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and the other of the president of the socialist group, Jayaprakash Narayan. It is delicate for me to give my opinion, when these two ardent lovers of their country speak in opposition. But as a satyagrahi, I must overcome the delicacy.

"Jayaprakash Narayan is a Congressman. It is an open secret that he was offered a seat on the Working Committee by Panditji, naturally under the belief that, whatever views he entertained, he was too honest to be disloyal to the Congress in action. If now, in spite of knowing the Congress President's views to the contrary, he adheres to his own opinion given to the contrary, it would appear to be an act of disloyalty to the Congress. If, therefore, he has not withdrawn from the false position, I hope, recognizing the aptness of my remarks, he will see the wisdom of retracing his steps.

"The Working Committee, rightly or wrongly, has taken a step. It has been endorsed by the A.-I.C.C. It is up to every Congressman to support the Congress going to the constituent assembly, by creating the atmosphere suitable for work in that assembly. This I say even to those, who distrust good faith in everything the British do. They may warn the Congress of the dangers they sense. This they were allowed by the president to have the fullest latitude to do at the recent A.-I.C.C. meeting. Anything in excess of that opposition is surely harmful for the country. I would consider as such the hartal on the 9th August.

"The Congress cannot have the cake and eat it too. It must be left free, it must be helped, to develop freedom through the constituent assembly. It will not be a waste of effort to honestly work the assembly for the purpose. The Congress must not kill the hen before it has laid.

"Then, mark the atmosphere in the country. There is senseless disorder as in Ahmedabad and elsewhere. There is a parody of satyagraha in the show staged by Dr. Ambedkar. For, in satyagraha the cause has to be just and clear, as well as the means. The cause is certainly vague, even if the means are non-violent. I doubt the wisdom of the sympathetic paralysis of all business in Bombay and elsewhere, assuming the postal strike to be good on merits. Many would seem to have left off all thinking. They seem to take up any nostrum without caring to examine its merits. To call for hartal in this atmosphere is to invite disorder. No disorder is conductive to the growth of independence. I hope that 9th August will see no hartal in India, but a peaceful and dignified, orderly celebration of the day, as advised by the President of the Congress."

Before despatching this article, Gandhi got the news of the withdrawal by Jayaprakash of the proposed hartal. In a postscript, wrote Gandhi: "I am glad that the spirit of discipline has dictated this withdrawal. I might have cancelled the foregoing, but for the important incidental observations in it."

A correspondent wrote: "Just as you have taught us to fight the Government non-violently, you should show us the way of quelling riots in a non-violent manner by personal example."

Gandhi replied: "It will be disgraceful on my part to sit at home and tell others to go and to lay down their lives. Such a thing cannot be an indication of non-violence. I have never had the chance to test my non-violence in the face of communal riots. It might be argued that it was my cowardice which prevented me from seeking such a chance. Be that as it may, God willing, the chance will still come to me, and by throwing me in fire, He will purify me and make the path of non-violence clear. None should take it to mean that sacrifice of my life will arrest all violence. Several lives like mine will have to be given, if the terrible violence that has spread all over, is to stop and non-violence reign supreme in its place. The poet has sung: 'The path of truth is for the brave, never for the coward.' The path of truth is the path of non-violence."

# *If I Were Minister*

1946

Gandhi's stay at Panchgani lasted for a fortnight. The three days' stay at Poona was packed with three conferences—Deccan Chiefs' Conference and two conferences of the industries and educational ministers from the Congress provinces.

The plan for the formation of a Deccan States Union had been engaging the attention of the chiefs of the Deccan States for some-time past. The Raja of Aundh and Shankarrao Deo invited Gandhi to address the chiefs on July 28, 1946 at Poona. Among those present were the Rajas of Aundh and Phaltan, Bhor and Jamkhandi, Miraj and Kurundwad (seniors), and representatives from Budhgaon and Ramdurg. N. C. Kelkar was present by special invitation.

Gandhi observed that it was a good thing that the princes were seriously thinking in terms of the whole of India, rather than only of themselves and of the protection, they had all these years thought, they were getting from the paramountcy of the British power. Only a few years ago, the princes felt that they could not be safe, except under the paramountcy of the British Crown. Now it seemed to have dawned on most of them that that was not the correct attitude. This was but natural, for they were, after all, sons of the soil. He had said openly on another occasion that the people of the states were slaves of slaves which the princes were. Princes exercised their authority within their own principalities, so long as they were in the good books of the British Government. They were made or unmade at the pleasure of the British Crown. The princes who had eyes opened to that vital fact were desirous of Indian independence equally with the people of India. If then they felt that need, they did not want a union of the states, but each state had first to form a union with its own people. Their people were the real power, on whom they were to depend for their status. It became trusteeship, if they became servants of their own people. If they took that attitude, they needed

no terms with the Congress or with any other organization. The immediate need was an understanding with their own people.

Gandhi made bold to take up that attitude, though his might be a lonely voice. In his opinion, the princes, as servants and trustees of their people, were worthy of their hire. It would then, but not before, be time to consider whether the princes and their people wanted a union among themselves. Such a union would be of a wholly different type from what they had conceived.

He had a suspicion that the present proposal was a creation of the British rulers, meaning the political agents. No blame need be imputed to them, if they advised such a union. They were brought up in no better tradition. They thought that when the British power was not in India, the princes would fight amongst themselves. That fear was wholly unjustifiable. They honestly believed that before they retired, as they must, within perhaps a few months, owing to force of circumstances, they should enable the princes to consolidate their power by organizing them into a union.

It was his belief that if India was not merely to be independent of the British control but was to enjoy the real freedom, which their country, by virtue of its ancient culture and tradition, was entitled to, it should grow from the bottom upwards, not be imposed from above. Otherwise, it would be a question of change of masters only. Instead of the English, there might be the allied powers or whosoever could impose himself on them. He did not look forward to that time. He looked forward to a time, when India would come into her own because of her intrinsic merit. To that consummation, princes could make a most handsome contribution.

If the Deccan princes played their part and set a solid example, they would follow. For that purpose, they did not need the suggested union. If, on the other hand, at the back of their minds, they had the idea that they would give the so-called responsible government to the people to the ear and break it to the heart, then the proposed union would be a kind of military combination, after the manner of the European powers. It would be used against the people, despite their protestations. That power would be useless against a first-class military power. They would be the first to lay down their arms before a venturesome aggressor. The British had taken good care not to give them training that might enable them to resist a power like themselves by force of arms.

What applied to the Indian states applied to the whole of India. India would have to serve a long period of tutelage at the feet of the western nations, before she could become a first-class military power. A quarter of a century's effort that the Congress had spent in teaching the country non-violence would in that event have been utterly wasted. That was not a prospect to which he could look forward with equanimity.

He had suggested to the Raja Saheb of Aundh, that the princes should, with necessary changes, copy the constitution of Aundh, if they wanted to take their due share in building up of a free India. That constitution was designed for the people. He would have liked it to go much further in such matters as the amount and the control of the privy purse, etc. But all that had to come naturally. It could not be imposed. The working of that constitution had made considerable progress—though not all the progress, which Raja Saheb of Aundh, his prime minister, or he would have liked.

After he had finished, a discussion followed. "Unless we unite, not a single state would have a survival value," said one ruler.

Gandhi replied: "I am prepared to join issue on it, though mine is perhaps a solitary voice. Every village has a survival value. Why should not your villages and hence you, if you will be part of the people? Aundh, one of the smallest among you, has a greater survival value than many of you. It depends upon you. So far as the people are concerned, they are one with the rest of India already.

"In an article that I have written for the *Harijan*, you will see my picture of independence. In that picture, the unit is the village community. The superstructure of independence is not to be built on the village unit, so that the top weighs down on and crushes the forty crores of people who constitute the base."

"But we shall ask our people to draw up their own constitution. The plan of the union that we have drawn up is only intended as a blue print for their consideration," explained another ruler.

"With the best intention in the world," replied Gandhi, "you will not be able to do that. You are brought up in a different tradition. Therefore, I suggest you should see Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru about it, if you will really let the people judge. He is the proper person to deal with this question as the President of the States' People's Conference. You should not be afraid to approach the States' People's Conference with your suggestions. Let the conference decide finally.

Their present policy is sound and not hostile to you, considered as servants and trustees of your people."

"We are anxious to serve our country. But we are so small that we cannot serve, unless we merge into a union."

"Not in my picture of independent India," he replied. "A village unit, as conceived by me, is as strong as the strongest. My imaginary village consists of a thousand souls. Such a unit can give a good account of itself, if it is well organized on a basis of self-sufficiency. Do not, therefore, think that, unless you have a big union, you will not be able to give a good account of yourself. If princes are all of one mind and the interest of the people is first and themselves last, theirs will be a more solid union than the one now proposed."

"What would you say, if the states organized themselves on basis of village republics first and then formed them into a union?"

"That would be excellent, but then you will speak a different language and proceed to work in an altogether different way."

"But that may take a long time and, unless it is done by people outside first, our people will not take to it."

Gandhi remarked: "The states can make the finest contribution to the building of India's future independence, if they set the right example in their own territories. They, as individual states, being compact, homogeneous units can well afford to make experiments in government. As it is, the princes have taken the lead only in copying the bad points of the British system. They allow themselves to be led by the nose by their ministers, whose administrative talent consists only in extorting money from their dumb, helpless subjects. By their tradition and training, they are unfitted to do the job, you have let them do. Therefore, my advice is: 'Make Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru your chief minister, if you are in earnest. Let him present you with an outline. He will naturally consult the people.' "

"We want to organize ourselves into a union, so that our people may have swaraj first, without waiting for the labours of constituent assembly to be finished, which may take time."

"That is the wrong way of going about the thing," he said. "If you are solicitous of the welfare of people and want them to come into their own, give them the fullest liberty straightaway. By the time you have done that, the constituent assembly will have finished its work. The constitution, which it will frame, will not be for British India merely, but for the whole of India. And that constitution will

provide for a State Union or Unions, if it is desirable. You should assist them, instead of anticipating them by forming your union. Begin with the individual, and you will not then go wrong."

"Are you opposed to union, because it is suspect in your eyes?" asked Mr. Kelkar.

Gandhi replied: "I began with that. But I do not oppose it on the ground of my suspicion. I suspect not you, A, B, or C, but the circumstances. You do not know the danger and mischief you are running into. Hence my advice to you to hasten slowly."

"If you stretch your argument, would it not apply equally to the district and taluk organization in the provinces? Why do you not ask for their dissolution?"

Gandhi replied: "I am not asking you to dissolve anything that already exists—not that I am enamoured of the machinery of administration set up in British India. History tells us it was devised mainly to facilitate the revenue collection. You will follow it only at your cost. My point just now is: do not do anything in the shape of unions. Leave that work to be done by the constituent assembly. As a Sanskrit poet says, not to rush into new enterprises is the first mark of wisdom."

Education Ministers from the Congress provinces met in a conference to discuss the plans of basic education at Poona on July 29 and the following day. Gandhi attended the conference for an hour on the first day. He spoke in answer to the question of Dr. Zakir Husain, who was anxious that in over-zeal, they should not take a bigger bite than they could chew. An over-ambitious programme, which they had not the means to implement, might prove a trap.

Gandhi said that he knew clearly enough, what was to be done but he did not quite know how it could be done. So far, they had their course mapped out for them, but now they had to sail on unchartered waters. He knew their difficulties. It was not easy for those who had been brought up in the old tradition, to break away from it at a stroke. If they were in the ministerial chair, he would issue broad instructions that, hereafter, all educational activity of the Government should be on the basic education lines. Adult education drives had been launched in several provinces. If he had his way, he would conduct them also through a basic craft. In his opinion, cotton spinning and the allied processes were crafts *par excellence* for this purpose. But he would leave the choice of the craft to the people

concerned in each case, in the certain belief, that in the end that craft alone, which had the necessary intrinsic merit, would survive. It should be the job of inspectors and other officers of Education Department, to go among people and teachers of schools and by persuasion and argument, educate them in the value and utility of the Government's new educational policy. That was their primary job, not to lord it over them. If they had no faith in it, or if they were unwilling loyally to work out the new policy, he would give them the choice to resign. But he did not think that it would be necessary, if the ministers knew their job and put their shoulder to the wheel. Merely issuing orders would not do the trick.

What he had said about adult education, applied equally to the university education. It must be organically related to the Indian scene. It must, therefore, be an extension and a continuation of the basic education course. That was the central point. If they did not see eye to eye with him on that point, he was afraid, they would have little use for his advice. If, on the other hand, they agreed with him that the present university education did not fit them for independence, but only enslaved them, they would be as impatient as he was to completely overhaul and scrap that system and remodel it on new lines, consonant with the national requirement.

Today, the youth, educated in our universities, either ran after the Government jobs, or fell into devious ways and sought an outlet for their frustration by fomenting unrest. They were not even ashamed to beg, or sponge upon others. Such was their sad plight. The aim of university education should be to turn out true servants of the people, who would live and die for the country's freedom. He was, therefore, of the opinion that the university education should be co-ordinated and brought into line with basic education by taking in teachers from the Talimi Sangh.

The ministers had accepted office as the people's representatives. Their writ would not run beyond the four walls of the council hall, unless they could carry the people with them. What was taking place in Bombay and Ahmedabad today was an ominous symptom, if it portended that the Congress had lost its hold over the people. Nayee Talim was as yet a tender sapling but it held out big promise. Its growth could not be forced by ministerial ukases, if popular support was lacking. If, therefore, they could not command popular support, his advice to them would be to tender their resignations.

The ministers should not be afraid of anarchy. Theirs was only to do their duty, according to their light, and to leave the rest to God. The people would learn the lesson of true independence, even out of that experience.

He then invited questions. The first question was: "Can the basic education be conducted minus the self-support basis?"

"You can certainly try," replied Gandhi. "But if you ask my advice, I will tell you that in that event, you had better forget basic education altogether. Self-sufficiency is not an *a priori* condition, but to me it is the acid test. This does not mean that basic education will be self-supporting from the very start. But, taking the entire period of seven years, covered by the basic education plan, income and expenditure must balance each other. Otherwise, it would mean that, even at the end of their training, the basic education students will not be fitted for life. That is the negation of basic education. Nayee Talim without the self-support basis would, therefore, be like a lifeless body."

Question: "We have accepted the principle of giving education through a basic craft. But the Muslims are somehow opposed to the spinning wheel. Your emphasis on spinning is perhaps all right in cotton tracts. But don't you agree that it is unsuited to areas, where the cotton crop is not grown? May not some other craft be substituted for it in such places—agriculture, for instance?"

Gandhi: "This is a very old question. Any basic craft, to serve as a medium for education, must answer the test of universality. As early as 1909, I came to the conclusion that to make India free and to enable her to stand on her own legs, the spinning wheel had to hum in every home. If England can become an exporter of textiles to India and to the whole world, although she does not grow one pod of cotton, I cannot understand why we cannot introduce cotton spinning in our homes, merely because the cotton would have to be obtained from a neighbouring province or district. As a matter of fact, there is no part of India where cotton was not at one time grown. Localization of cotton cultivation in 'cotton tracts' is only a recent and anomalous development, forced upon India by cotton-manufacturing interests, at the expense of the poor taxpayer and cotton spinner of India. Even today, tree cotton grows everywhere in India. Such arguments as yours speak ill of our capacity for taking initiative for our enterprise and resourcefulness. It would kill

all manufactures, if transportation of raw materials from another place were to be regarded as an insuperable handicap.

"Moreover, to enable a person to clothe himself through his own effort, when the alternative is to go naked, is in itself an education. An intelligent pursuit of the various processes related to the cotton spinning has, besides, a very high instructional value. In fact, this covers the whole education of man, as, perhaps, no other craft does. We may not today be able to dispel the doubts of the Muslims, as they are rooted in a delusion and delusion is a very real thing to its victim, while he is under its spell. But if our own faith is clear and firm, and we can demonstrate the success of our method, the Muslims will themselves come to us and ask to be taught the secret of our success. They do not seem to have realized that the charkha has done more for the poorest Muslim masses than even the Muslim League or any other Muslim organization. The bulk of the weavers in Bengal are Muslims. Nor should it be forgotten that Dacca owed its world-wide fame for its *shabnams* to the deftness and skill of the Muslim women spinners and Muslim weavers.

"The same applies to Maharashtra. The best cure for delusion is to concentrate on the performance of one's own duty. Truth alone will endure, all the rest will be swept away before the tide of time. I must continue to bear testimony to truth, even if I am forsaken by all. Mine may today be a voice in the wilderness, but it will be heard when all other voices are silenced, if it is the voice of truth."

"To produce efficient teachers for Nayee Talim would take some time. What should be done to improve the education in the schools in the meantime?" asked Mr. Avinashilingam Chettiar, speaking in English. Gandhi chaffing him for it suggested that, if he could not speak in Hindustani, he might whisper what he had to say into his neighbour's ear, who would render it into Hindustani for him.

Gandhi observed: "If you realize that the present system of education cannot bring India independence, but it only can serve to deepen India's slavery, you will refuse to encourage it, irrespective of whether any other takes its place or not. You will do whatever you can within the four corners of the principles of Nayee Talim, and be satisfied with that. If people did not want the ministers on those terms, it would be better for the ministers to resign. They could not possibly be party to catering for poison, because they could not provide, or because the people did not relish life-giving food."

Question: "You say that for Nayee Talim we do not need money but men. But to train men, we again need institutions and, therefore, money. How can we get out of this vicious circle?"

Gandhi: "The remedy lies in your own hands. Begin with yourself. There is an English proverb: 'Charity begins at home.' But if you yourself will sit in an easy chair like a sahib and expect others of the 'lesser breed' to get ready for the job, you will get nowhere. That is not my way. It has been my practice, ever since my childhood, to begin with myself and my immediate environment, in howsoever humble a way. Let us in this respect take a leaf out of the book of the British people. A mere handful of them came to and settled in India in the first instance, and carved out an empire for themselves, which is even more formidable in its cultural than in its political aspect, so much so, that, today we are so infatuated with English that we hug it just as a slave hugs its fetters, even at the cost of the mother tongue. Think of the faith, single-minded devotion, sacrifice and perseverance, which must have been at the back of it. It only shows that where there is a will, there is a way. Let us be up and doing with the firm resolve not to give up, come what may, and all the difficulties will melt away."

Question: "What is the place of English in this programme? Should it be made compulsory or taught only as an optional, second language?"

Gandhi: "I must cling to my mother tongue, as to my mother's breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It alone can give me the life-giving milk. I love the English tongue in its own place, but I am its inveterate opponent, if it usurps a place, which does not belong to it. English is today admittedly the world language. I therefore, would, accord English a place as a second, optional language, not in the school but in the university course. That can only be for the select few—not for the millions. Today, when we have not the means to introduce even the free compulsory primary education, how can we make provision for teaching English? Russia has achieved all her scientific progress without English. It is our mental slavery, that makes us feel that we cannot do without English. I can never subscribe to that defeatist creed."

What should be the end of our economic policy and the nature of the social organization that should be built up and what are the obstacles in the present economic and administrative organization

in achieving the goal of rural prosperity—these were the questions that the Ministers for Industries from the various provinces, who met in Poona, on July 31, set themselves to examine.

Gandhi explained his approach to village industries in the course of his address. The conception underlying both the Nayee Talim and the village industries programme, including khaddar, was rooted in the same thing, namely, concern for the dignity and the status of the village unit as against the big cities, and of individual against the machine. This concern was further augmented by the fact that India lives not in a handful of her big cities, but in her 700,000 villages. The problem was of re-establishment of justice between the town and the village. As it was, the balance was heavily tipped in favour of the former to the disadvantage of the latter.

"Ours has been described as the machine age," remarked Gandhi, "because the machine dominates our economy. What is a machine? one may ask. In a sense, man is the most wonderful machine in creation. It can neither be duplicated, nor copied." He had, however, used the word not in its wider sense, but in the sense of an appliance that tended to displace the human or animal labour instead of supplementing it, or merely increasing its efficiency. That was the first differential characteristic of the machine. The second characteristic was that there was no limit to its growth or its evolution. That could not be said of the human labour. There was a limit beyond which its capacity or mechanical efficiency could not go. Out of this circumstance arose the third characteristic of the machine. It seemed to be possessed of a will or genius of its own. Machine was antagonistic to man's labour. Thus, it tended more to displace man, one machine doing the work of hundred, if not a thousand, who went to swell the army of unemployed and underemployed, not because it was desirable, but because that was its law. In America it had perhaps reached the extreme limit. He had been opposed to it not from today, but even before 1909, when he was in South Africa surrounded by machines. Their onward march had not only not impressed him, but had repelled him. "It then dawned upon me that to suppress and exploit the millions, the machine was the device *par excellence*; it had no place in man's economy, if, as social units, all men were to be equal. It is my belief that machine has not added to man's stature and it will not serve the world, but disrupt it, unless it is put in its proper place. Then, I read Ruskin's

*Unto This Last*, during a train journey to Durban, and it gripped me immediately. I saw clearly that if mankind was to progress and to realize the ideal of equality and brotherhood, it must adopt and act on the principle of *Unto This Last;* it must take along with it even the dumb, the halt and the lame. Did not Yudhishthira, the Prince of Righteousness, refuse to enter heaven, without his faithful dog?"

In the machine age, these had no place. Under it, the fittest alone survived, to the exclusion and at the cost of the weak. "But that is not my picture of independence, in which there is room even for the weakest," observed Gandhi. "That requires that we must utilize all available human labour, before we entertain the idea of employing mechanical power."

It was with that background that he was instrumental in founding the Talimi Sangh and A.-I.V.I.A. The object was to strengthen the Congress, which claimed to be essentially the people's organization. The Congress had created these autonomous institutions. The Congress ministries could requisition the services of these organizations always and without any compunction. They existed and they laboured for the villagers, who were the backbone of the Congress. But the ministries were under no obligation. If they had no faith in what these organizations stood for, then they should plainly say so through the Working Committee. To play with a thing, when they had no heart in it, would be worse than useless. They should take it up, only if they believed with him that it alone held the key to the economic and political salvation of the country. They should not deceive themselves or others.

The foundation of village industries was agriculture: "Years ago I read a poem in which the peasant is described as the father of the world. If God is the provider, the cultivator is His hand. What are we going to do to discharge the debt that we owe to him. So long we have only lived on the sweat of his brow. We should have begun with the soil, but we could not do so. The fault is partly mine."

There were people, he remarked, who said that no basic reform in agriculture was possible, without political power. They dreamt in terms of industrialization of agriculture by large scale application of steam and electricity. He warned them that trading in soil fertility for the sake of quick returns would prove to be a disastrous, short-sighted policy. It would result in virtual depletion of the soil. Good earth called for the sweat of one's brow to yield the bread of life.

People might criticize that approach as being unprogressive and slow. It did not hold out promise of dramatic results. Nevertheless, he maintained that it held the key to the prosperity of both the soil and the inhabitants living on it. Healthy and nourishing food was the alpha and the omega of rural economy. The bulk of a peasant's family budget goes to feed him and his family. All other things come afterwards. Let the tiller of the soil be well fed. Let him have a sufficiency of fresh, pure milk and ghee and oil, fish, eggs, and meat, if he is a non-vegetarian. What would fine clothes, for instance, avail him, if he is ill-nourished and under fed? The question of water-supply and other things would come next. A consideration of these questions would naturally involve such issues, as the place of plough cattle in the economy of agriculture, as against tractor plough and power irrigation, etc., and thus, bit by bit, the whole picture of rural economy would emerge before them. In this picture, cities would take their natural place and not appear as unnatural—congested spots or boils on the body politic, as they were today. "We stand today in danger of forgetting the use of our hands," he concluded. "To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves. To think that your occupation of the ministerial chair will be vindicated if you serve cities only, would be to forget that India resides in her 700,000 village units. What would it profit a man, if he gained the world but lost his soul into the bargain?"

Question: "You have called cities boils or abscesses on the body politic. What should be done with these boils?"

Gandhi: "If you ask a doctor, he will tell you what to do with a boil. It has to be cured either by lancing or by the application of plasters and poultices. Edward Carpenter called civilization a malady which needed a cure. The growth of the big cities is only a symptom of that malady. Being a nature-curist, I am naturally in favour of nature's way of cure by a general purification of the system. If the hearts of the city dwellers remain rooted in the villages, if they become truly village-minded, all other things will automatically follow and the boil will quickly heal."

Question: "What practical steps can be taken to protect village crafts from the invasion of foreign and Indian-manufactured goods under the present circumstances?"

Gandhi: "I can only speak in broad terms. If you have felt in your heart that you have taken the office as the custodians and the

representatives of the interests of the masses, everything that you do, your legislation, your executive orders, the instructions that you issue, will breathe concern for the villager. To protect his interests, you do not need the Viceroy's sanction. Supposing you want to protect the hand-spinner and the hand-weaver against the competition of mills and solve the problem of cloth shortage for the masses, you will put aside the red tape and send for the millowners and will tell them that, unless they want you to go out of office, they must make their production policy conform to the requirement of the masses, whose custodian and representative you are. You will also tell them not to send mill cloth to certain areas, which are put under hand production or produce a certain range of yarns and textiles, which comes within the handloom weaver's domain. If you are in earnest, your word will go home, and they will willingly give their co-operation as they did recently, when they provided the required textiles for export to Indonesia, in return for Indonesian surplus rice for the relief of the Indian famine. But there must be that inner conviction first; everything else will then be all right."

In an editorial entitled "If I were the Minister", Gandhi wrote:

"The talks with the ministers concerned at Poona on 29th July to 31st July on the village crafts and the basic education have given rise to a lot of correspondence and private discussion. For the guidance of the provincial governments and the others interested in the question of khadi which has naturally occasioned the bulk of the correspondence and discussion, I set forth below my thoughts on the subject.

"My first business, as minister in charge of revival of the villages as the centre of all governmental activity, would be to find out from among the permanent service honest and incorruptible men capable for the work. I would put the best among them in touch with the A.-I.S.A. and the A.-I.V.I.A., creations of the Congress, and bring in a scheme for giving the village crafts the greatest encouragement. I would stipulate there should be no compulsion on the villagers, that the villagers must not slave for others and that they should be taught to help themselves and to rely upon their own labour and skill for the production of articles of food, cloth and other necessaries. The scheme would thus have to be comprehensive. I would instruct my first man, therefore, to see the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and see what it has to say.

"Let me assume that the scheme, thus produced, contains a clause saying that villagers themselves declare that they would not want the mill cloth, say, after one year from a fixed date, that they require cotton, wool and necessary implements and instruction, not as a gift but to be paid for on the easiest terms. The scheme provides too, that it will not apply at once to the whole of any province, but to a part to begin with. The scheme further tells one that the A.-I.S.A. will guide and assist the working of the scheme.

"Being convinced of its soundness, I would give it a legal form in consultation with the law department and issue a notification, fully describing the genesis of the scheme. The villagers, as well as mill-owners and the others, would have been party to it. The notification will show clearly that it is the people's measure, though bearing the Government stamp. The Government money will be used for the benefit of the poorest villagers, making the largest return possible to the people concerned. And it will, therefore, be probably the most profitable investment, in which expert assistance will be voluntary and overhead charges the least item. The notification will give in detail, the whole cost to the country and the return to the people.

"The only question for me as minister is, whether the A.-I.S.A. has the conviction and capacity to shoulder the burden of creating and guiding a khadi scheme to success. If it has, I would put my little barque to sea with all confidence."

Khaddar had passed through several phases during its variegated history in the last twenty-five years. From being an antique rarity, khaddar had become the livery of freedom. It became the basis of the biggest producers' and consumers' co-operative. But that was not enough for Gandhi. If it was fully to play the role envisaged for it, namely, serve as a foundation for a non-violent social order, capable of withstanding all shocks of time and chance, its basis had to be re-examined and transformed. This was done by a series of resolutions adopted by the A.-I.S.A. under the direction of Gandhi on his release from detention. The principal change was the transference of the emphasis from the commercial to the self-help aspect of khadi. Those who had taken to khadi merely as a livery, but had never accepted the obligations inherent in it, began to experience an increasing difficulty in obtaining khadi from the depleted khadi bhandars who refused to supply it to those who did not participate in its production. A friend discussed all these difficulties with Gandhi; he could

not see the justification of enforcing rules that would restrict the supply of khadi at a time, when the demand for it was widespread and daily growing.

Gandhi explained: "To appreciate fully the present policy of the A.-I.S.A., you have to take in its etiology. In the initial stages, the emphasis was on bringing some relief to the poor. Incidentally, it had provided a living link between the classes and the masses and had assumed a political significance. We cannot make further headway on those lines. We cannot, for instance, further increase the wages. Khadi won't bear it. So far, it was spun and woven by the masses. Now it must still be by the masses, but for their own use. The new policy of the A.-I.S.A. has not failed. The latest figures show that it is steadily, though slowly, making headway.

"There are many difficulties. Weaving constitutes the bottle-neck. We have not established a sufficient hold on the weavers. The fault, again, is mine. If I had from the very beginning insisted on all learning weaving, along with the spinning, things would have been different today. The working capital of the A.-I.S.A. now stands at twenty-five lakhs. It has taken twenty-five years to reach that figure. During that period, it had distributed over seven crores of rupees as wages among the four and a half lakhs of the poor spinners and weavers, principally spread over twenty thousand villages of India. I do not know of another instance of such a huge turnover on so little capital, in such a wide area."

"That is good, but by no means unique. The Chinese Indusco did better," remarked the visitor.

"But that is not a fair comparison," replied Gandhi. "I studied during detention Nym Wales' book, which was recommended to me. Indusco's activities were carried on under abnormal circumstances with the backing of the Chinese National Government. Besides, all its production was war-time production. You need not have gone as far as China for your illustration. The work of the Calicut Mission in South India would have provided a more apt instance. In each case the field was restricted. In the case of khadi, it is trying to serve the whole of India."

"We cannot today attract more artisans by offering better wages. The general level of wages in the country is already so high."

"We do not want to," said Gandhi.

"You mean to say you want them to produce for self?"

"Yes," asserted Gandhi emphatically.

"How can that be made practicable?" asked the visitor.

"I explained that to Mr. Casey last year," said Gandhi. "I told him that by adopting my scheme, not only could we solve the cloth problem for Bengal, but for the whole of India. The essence of that scheme was that, instead of supplying textiles to the people, they should be taught how to make cloth for themselves and provided the necessary means, instruments, raw materials, etc., for the same. A reasonable time-limit should be fixed, after which no textiles would be rationed in the area covered by the scheme. In German East Africa, I am told, cloth shortage during the first World War was actually met by Negroes being induced to manufacture their own cloth. Whether that is so or not, if India made full use of her spinning and weaving tradition, which is universal, and the matchless hereditary skill of her artisans, she could not only solve her own difficulty, but even help the world to meet the present crisis by releasing her mill production for countries, less favourably placed in the matter of cloth manufacture."

"The fact, however, remains that, in spite of there being such an acute cloth scarcity, khadi has failed to step into the breach," persisted the visitor. "It has missed the bus."

"Thanks to the Government interference," said Gandhi. "They arrested khadi workers, burnt stocks of khadi and put khadi production under every conceivable handicap."

"Vacuum is growing. Production charges have already touched the ceiling and yet the wages, that we can offer, are not adequate to attract even the unemployed."

"Where are these unemployed?" asked Gandhi.

"Well, there are one lakh of I.N.A. men."

"I made an offer to them. It has yet evoked no response. You can take the horse to the trough, but you can't make it drink."

"Cannot the Government formulate a scheme?"

"It has been done in Madras," he said. "It is under examination. Nothing can be imposed from above. Everything has to be worked from below. And those who work them should have faith and conviction and spirit of service. A Government ukase will not do the trick. Governments can assist. As I told Mr. Casey, I am prepared to work out my scheme if it is left to me, and the Government accord necessary facilities. That offer still stands."

"The danger is that, if we stop the supply of textiles to any area, as envisaged in your scheme, it may accentuate the present discontent and even cause an upheaval. There are elements ready to pounce upon and exploit any excuse to foment discontent. Restriction on cloth supply might even be enumerated as an 'atrocity', as prohibition was, by a certain section in Bombay. How can we contemplate or invite a disturbance like that? This is not a constructive approach to the question. It smacks of compulsion."

"Where is the question of compulsion?" asked Gandhi. "As it is, there is not enough cloth to go the round. The stocks of cloth available for distribution being short of the demand, rationing becomes a necessity. The question is only of wise distribution. No stocks may be expected from outside for some time. America and England are making strenuous efforts to increase their cloth production. But it is all needed there. If we nationalize our textile industry and work it on a double shift basis, it would probably solve the problem of cloth shortage, but not of mass poverty. I will not then be able to press the case for khadi, not because there would be no case, but because I will not be able to carry conviction."

"That is not my point," rejoined the friend. "A certain element of compulsion there is in all governmental measures. Tariff, protection, excise duties—all these are disguised forms of compulsion. It becomes an evil, when it is wrongly or unduly used. If a fundamentally unsound and unstable economic situation is sought to be propped up by governmental compulsion, there is danger that it will crash one day and spread ruin all around. I am wondering, if the organization of khadi production on the present lines is not an instance of that type, whether pure theory does not need to be tempered with a measure of practical realism to suit the changed conditions. For instance, the woollen manufactures in Kashmir are not meant for self-use. They cater for the market for fancy goods outside Kashmir. They are extremely popular. Now, if we introduce machine carding, they can hold their own against all competition. But that would be against the fundamental khadi principles. I have been thinking, whether a compromise cannot be effected. To run cottage industries with man-power exclusively has not much prospect of survival in this age of machinery. We can try to canalize economic trends, we can't run against them in a head-on collision. If we run cottage industries with the help of cheap electricity, for

instance, they would be able to hold their own without losing their essential character. After all, decentralized production is what we want. We might have projects for development of cheap hydraulic power as an aid to the irrigation schemes. They can be in operation from in six to ten years. It will then be possible to take electricity to each village. Shall we under those circumstances be able to work khadi on the present lines? Normally speaking, the supply should balance demand. But instead of establishing khadi on a permanent basis, we are crippling it by artificial restrictions with the result that a lot of corruption and dishonesty has crept in. The same yarn is presented again and again at the khadi bhandars as a counterfeit token. Apart from its economic aspect, khadi has come to acquire cultural and political significance. People are anxious to adopt it as a uniform. Hospitals would like to have their linen preferably in khadi. The I.N.A. people would want to adopt khadi uniform. But today, thanks to the new policy, khadi is nowhere to be had. Only hypocrisy and dishonesty seem to flourish."

Gandhi said: "It is open to those who cannot or do not want to spin to go in for mill cloth, whether Indian or foreign. I am walking with my eyes open. This is not the first time in the history of khadi that demand has outstripped supply and *vice versa.* Each time, heroic measures were adopted and the crisis was overcome. I do not expect a different result this time. Only, we must have the faith and patience and courage to apply the right remedy, which is what I am doing at present. If, in the process, khadi dies, I must be prepared to take even that risk."

"That is begging the question," rejoined the friend. "It will not go down with the people. We have got to adjust our policy to the popular need."

"I cannot do that," said Gandhi. "Having discovered the error, I must correct it. That may take time. Therefore, I have suggested the removal of khadi clause from the Congress constitution. When it was sought to be removed unsuccessfully at the Assam Congress, it gave me satisfaction. Now I will encourage and welcome abolition. If it has intrinsic merit, it will survive the Congress abolition. If it has not, khadi will deserve to go under."

"That, however, would not solve our fundamental problem."

"I am afraid I won't be able to convince you by argument. Time alone will show who was right," said Gandhi.

"You said weaving was the bottle-neck," resumed the friend. "A weaver weaving mill yarn can today earn as much as three rupees a day. The spinner and the weaver of the hand-spun will not work for lower wages."

"I do not want him to," replied Gandhi. "That is why, I have recommended doubling of hand-spun yarn. If he depends on the supply of mill yarn, he is doomed. The millowners are not philanthropists to go on providing yarn to the handloom weaver, when he enters into effective competition with them. But a weaver working on doubling hand-spun yarn will, in the end, be better off than the mill yarn weaver, for, the former will find steady employment all the year round."

"The very basis of textile industry has been revolutionized," continued the friend. "Now they are preparing synthetic textile fibres from coal, air and water. Felting of cotton fibres with the help of resins is taking the place of weaving. Unless we make sure that our khadi policy rests on a sound practicable basis and fits into the overall picture, khadi is bound to fail."

"It may, but the labour expended on it won't have been wasted."

"No good effort is ever wasted," proceeded the friend. "But the latest orientation of your khadi policy continues to perplex many a sincere khadi lover and worker. Their perplexity ought to be removed. Some even talk of going in for uncertified khadi."

"The perplexity will not be removed if they have no faith in khadi," said Gandhi.

"So long as there is a demand for khadi, it ought to be fulfilled even if prices of khadi have to be raised."

"That means that khadi will become fancy goods," said Gandhi. It won't be right to use a vast organization for such a purpose. Our duty is to find out and remedy, if there is any fundamental defect in our khadi policy, and if in the process, it is found that khadi is not basically a sound proposition, then it should be given a decent burial. Today khadi is on its trial. It will successfully emerge from it only by virtue of its inherent strength, and if it lacks that strength, all bother about it will be love's labour lost."

"All I know," persisted the friend, "is that, where there is widespread and genuine demand for a commodity and the supply falls short, it should be possible to devise ways and means to adjust the economic balance and satisfy the demand in question."

Gandhi said: "I can only warn you of the danger. There was a time, when we used machine-carded sliver for spinning. We might as well have used the mill yarn. For, what is a roving but unspun yarn? If we had not broken away from it, and had not introduced hand-carding, khadi would have been defunct by now. The late Sir Gangaram said: 'Only give up the spinning wheel, concentrate on the handloom and I am with you.' He did not realize, what we know today, that the use of mill yarn is the principal stranglehold on the handloom industry. In hand-spun yarn lies its only salvation. If the spinning wheel goes, the handloom is bound to follow suit. Khadi will cease to have any value in my eyes, if it does not usefully employ the millions. Many of the 'compromises' that have been suggested are such as to take away from it its essential character. The late Sir Fazalbhai prophesied to me, when I saw him thirty years ago, that khadi was ultimately bound to fail. He is gone but khadi has remained. May be a new era has now opened and khadi is an anachronism in it. Only, I do not feel so."

A correspondent wrote: "Do you believe that industrialization of India—to the extent of India producing her own ships, locomotives, aeroplanes, etc.—is necessary? If not, will you kindly suggest the alternative means by which India shall discharge her responsibilities as a free and independent nation?"

Gandhi replied: "I don't believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life, based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible, only when we learn the art of living nobly.

"There may be sensation in living dangerously. We must draw the distinction between living in the face of danger and living dangerously. A man who dares to live alone in a forest infested by wild beasts and wilder men without a gun and with God as his only help, lives in the face of danger. A man who lives perpetually in mid-air and dives to the earth below to the admiration of a gaping world lives dangerously. One is a purposeful, the other a purposeless life.

"Whether such plain living is possible for an isolated nation, however large geographically and numerically, in the face of a world,

armed to the teeth and in the midst of pomp and circumstance, is a question open to the doubt of a sceptic. The answer is straight and simple. If plain life is worth living, then the attempt is worth making even though, only an individual or a group makes the effort.

"At the same time I believe that some key industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm-chair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate the key industries, I would have state ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the state. But as I can conceive such a state only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess monied men by force, but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to state ownership. There are no pariahs of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers. The two are sores of the same disease. And 'all are men for a' that'.

"And I avow this belief in the face of the inhumanities we have witnessed and may still have to witness in India, as elsewhere. Let us live in the face of danger."

## *Interim Government*

1946

THE TWENTY-FIFTH anniversary of the Lokamanya's demise, which fell on the day Gandhi reached Uruli, evoked poignant memories. Speaking, after the evening prayer, he recalled how he had gone to attend the Lokamanya's funeral on receiving the sad news over the telephone. The funeral procession was composed of Muslims and Parsis no less than Hindus. He himself had got caught in the crush and had narrowly escaped injury. Those were the days, when the atmosphere was not poisoned by communal bitterness. There had been much change since then, but the memory of Lokamanya Tilak remains enshrined in the hearts and affection of his countrymen as ever before. The lapse of time had only added to his popularity. He was still with us, though he was physically no more. He had given us the mantra "swaraj is our birthright". That birthright belongs equally to all. Like the infinite, it is inexhaustible. To divide it, is not to take away.

May be that some questionable things were today being done in the late Lokamanya's name. But that was the way of the world. Even divinity is not proof against abuse. The evil, however, remains with the evil-doer. It does not detract from the lustre of divinity.

India was today on the eve of attaining her birthright, he said. In his opinion, the nature cure was an essential ingredient in the building of the swaraj of his conception. Attaining of true swaraj presupposed the triple purification of body, mind and soul.

The very next day, a villager was brought to him with injuries on his body, received at the hands of the thieves who had taken away ornaments from his house. "There are three ways", Gandhi told the villagers of Uruli, "of dealing with the present case". The first was the stereotyped orthodox way of reporting to the police. Very often it only provided the police a further opportunity for corruption and brought no relief to the victim. The second way, which was followed

by the general run of the village people, was to passively acquiesce in it. This was reprehensible, as it was rooted in cowardice. Crime would flourish, while cowardice remained. What was more, by such acquiescence, we ourselves became a party to the crime. The third way, which he commended, was that of pure satyagraha. It required that we should regard even the thieves and the criminals as our brothers and sisters, and crime as disease, of which the latter were the victims and needed to be cured. Instead of bearing ill will towards a thief or a criminal and trying to get him punished, they should try to get under his skin, understand the cause that had let him into crime and try to remedy it. They should, for instance, teach him a vocation and provide him with the means to make an honest living and thereby transform his life. They should realize that a thief or criminal was not a different being from themselves. Indeed, if they turned the searchlight inward and closely looked into their own souls, they would find that the difference between them was only one of degree. The moneyed man, who made his riches by exploitation or by other questionable means was no less guilty of robbery, than the thief who picked a pocket or broke into a house and committed theft. Only the rich man took refuge behind the facade of respectability and escaped the penalty of law. But strictly speaking, all amassing or hoarding of wealth, above and beyond one's legitimate requirements was theft. There would be no occasion for thefts and, therefore, no thieves, if there was a wise regulation of riches, and absolute social justice prevailed. In the swaraj of his conception, there would be no thieves and no criminals, or else it would be swaraj only in name. The criminal was only an indication of the social malady and since nature cure, as he envisaged it, included the triple cure for body, mind and soul, they must not be satisfied with merely banishing the physical illness from Uruli, their work must include the healing of the mind and soul too, so that there would be perfect social peace in their midst.

If they followed the nature cure way of dealing with the criminal, which, as he had already explained, was the way of satyagraha, they could not sit still in the face of crime. Only a perfect being could afford to lose himself within himself and to withdraw completely from the cares and the responsibilities of the world. But who could claim that perfection? "On the high seas, a sudden calm is always regarded by experienced pilots and mariners with concern. Absolute

calm is not the law of ocean. It is the same with the ocean of life. More often than not, it portends rough weather. A satyagrahi would, therefore, neither retaliate, nor would he submit to the criminal, but seek to cure him by curing himself. He will not try to ride two horses at a time, namely, to pretend to follow the law of satyagraha, while at the same time, seeking police aid. He must forswear the latter, in order to follow the former. If the criminal himself chooses to hand himself over to the police, it would be a different matter. You cannot expect to touch his heart and to win his confidence, if at the same time, you are prepared to go to the police and inform against him. That would be the gross betrayal of trust. A reformer cannot afford to be an informer." And by way of illustration, he mentioned several instances of how he had refused to give information to the police about persons who had been guilty of violence and had come and confessed to him. No police officer could compel a satyagrahi to give evidence against a person who had confessed to him. A satyagrahi would never be guilty of a betrayal of trust. He wanted the people of Uruli to adopt the method of satyagraha for dealing with crime and the criminals. They should contact the criminals in their homes, win their confidence and trust, by loving and selfless service, wean them from evil and unclean habits and help to rehabilitate them by teaching them honest ways of living.

Under "Nature Cure and Modern Treatment", he wrote:

"My nature cure is designed solely for the villagers and villages. Therefore, there is no place in it for the microscope, X-rays and similar things. Nor is there room in nature cure for medicines, such as the quinine, the emetin and the penicillin. Personal hygiene and healthy living are of primary importance. And these should suffice. If everyone could achieve perfection in this art, there could be no disease. And, while obeying all the laws of nature, in order to cure illness, if it does come, the sovereign remedy ever lies in Ramanam. But this cure through Ramanam cannot become universal in the twinkling of an eye. To carry conviction to the patient, the physician has to be a living embodiment of the power of Ramanam. Meantime, all that can possibly be had from the five agencies of nature must be taken and used. They are earth, water, ether, fire and wind. This, to my mind, is the limit of nature cure. Therefore, my experiment in Uruli Kanchan consists in teaching the villagers, how to live clean and healthy lives and in trying to cure the sick through

the proper use of the five agencies. If necessary, curative herbs that grow locally, may be used. Wholesome and balanced diet, of course, is an indispensable part of nature cure."

During his short stay at Uruli Kanchan, Gandhi gave practical lessons in nature cure method. On "The Meaning of Nature Cure" he wrote:

"I have from time to time written a little about it, but as the idea is developing, it will be a good thing to tell something regarding its limitations in Uruli Kanchan. Human ailments, whether of village or town, are of three kinds, bodily, mental and spiritual. And what applies to one individual, applies generally to the other and also to society, as a whole.

"The majority of the inhabitants of Uruli Kanchan are business folk. The Mangs live on one side of the village, Mahars on another and people of the Kanchan caste on yet another. The name of the village is derived from this last group. There are some gypsies living here too, who are termed criminal tribes under the law. The Mangs earn their living by making ropes, etc. They were well off during the war but have now fallen on bad days and are living from hand to mouth. The problem that faces the nature cure doctor is how to deal with the malady of the Mangs, which is by no means an ailment to be ignored. It is really the duty of the business man in Uruli Kanchan to stamp out this social disease. No medicines from any dispensary are going to avail in this case, and yet it is no less poisonous a disease than cholera. Some of the tenements of the Mangs are fit only for a bonfire. But burning will not provide them with new dwellings. Where would they put their belongings, and where would they seek shelter from rain and cold? These are the difficulties to be overcome and the nature cure physician cannot be blind to them. What can be done for the criminal tribes? The criminal tribes do not deliberately commit crime for the joy of it. They are victims of an agelong tradition and, therefore, labelled criminals. It becomes the duty of the residents of Uruli Kanchan to free them from the evil habit. The nature cure man may not neglect this work. Such problems will continually face him. Thus, on reflection, we can see that the field of work for him is very wide and that it is the work for true swaraj. It can succeed through God's grace, only if all the workers and residents of Uruli Kanchan are true and determined to reach the goal."

In a letter of August 4, 1946, he wrote to Dr. Dinsha Mehta:

"My idea of developing nature cure in Uruli Kanchan and the villages of India is fast expanding. It means teaching the hygiene of the body and mind and soul of the individual and society. Thus the workers in Uruli Kanchan have, besides cleaning the streets of the village, attending to their bodily ailments through the judicious use of earth, sun, ether, light and water, to attend to the pauperism of the criminal tribes called Garudis—described in law as one of the criminal tribes of India—and the rapacity of the Pathans in exacting interest are all social diseases demanding treatment by a real nature cure man. That, ordinarily, these things are not regarded as diseases in nature cure books, does not worry me. I, and if you like, we, as trustees for nature cure in the villages and cities of India cannot be satisfied with less. Therefore, we cannot be contented if we periodically reduce obesity and deal with other ailments, knowing that the same patients will suffer from the same diseases and return annually for treatment. Workers in Uruli Kanchan have been doing some such work as I have described above, but not methodically. Now they must not be satisfied, unless they become efficient workers and train similar workers, who will be able to replace them. For this work, we do not need a long course. Our aim should not be to replace surgeons or physicians of modern type or hakims. Our work is conceived in a different key. It requires original training. We have to produce original books. It needs concentration of work in Uruli. Before a visible picture considered in this light emerges, and you are able to assimilate it, we may not be able to do much in Sinhagad. Think of what I have said. . . Come to Sevagram whenever you like, but not before the end of this month. I do not know whether I shall have settled life in Sevagram. So many things are happening in the country to disturb the even tenor of life."

Gandhi stayed at Uruli for four days and returned to Sevagram on August 6 to participate in the Working Committee meeting to be held at Wardha on the 8th. "Direct Action Day" was fixed by the Muslim League on August 16. Stating its attitude towards the constituent assembly, the Congress resolution said:

"The Working Committee of the Congress regret to note that the council of the All-India Muslim League, reversing their previous decision, have decided not to participate in the constituent assembly. The committee have noted that the criticisms have been advanced on

behalf of the Muslim League to the effect that the Congress acceptance of the proposals contained in the statement of May 16 was conditional. The committee wish to make it clear that, while they did not approve of all the proposals contained in this statement, they accepted the scheme in its entirety. They interpreted it so as to resolve the inconsistencies contained in it and fill the omissions in accordance with the principles laid down in the statement. They hold that provincial autonomy is a basic provision and each province has the right to decide whether to form or join a group or not. Questions of interpretation will be decided by the procedure laid down in the statement itself, and the Congress will advise its representatives in the constituent assembly to function accordingly.

"The committee have emphasized the sovereign character of the constituent assembly, that is, its right to function and to draw up a constitution for India without interference of any external power or authority. But the assembly will naturally function within the internal limitations which are inherent in its task, and will, therefore, seek the largest co-operation in drawing up a constitution of free India allowing the greatest measure of freedom and protection for all just claims and interests. The committee hope that the Muslim League and all others concerned, in the wider interests of the nation as well as of their own, will join in this great task."

The Congress accepted the Viceroy's proposal for the immediate formation of an Interim Government. Nehru in his capacity as the President of the Congress wrote to Jinnah, suggesting a coalition government. "The Wardha resolution," replied Jinnah, "does not call for revision of the League decision."

As a result of the observance by the League of Direct Action Day, more than 90 persons were killed and 1,000 injured in Calcutta on August 16. There was violence in other parts of the country and the atmosphere was tense. In an editorial, "What Can Violence Do?", Gandhi wrote:

"If the newspaper reports are to be believed, responsible ministers in Sind and other equally responsible Leaguers almost all over, are preaching violence in naked language. Nakedness is itself a virtue as distinguished from hypocrisy. But when it is a hymn of obscenity, it is a vice to be shunned, whether it resides in a Leaguer or any other person. Any Muslim who is not in the League is a traitor, says one. The Hindu is a kafir deserving the fate of such, says another.

"Calcutta has given an ocular demonstration of what the direct action is and how it is to be done.

"Who is the gainer? Certainly not the Muslim masses, nor the sober follower of Islam, which itself means sobriety and peace. The very salute 'salam alaikum' means 'peace be unto you'.

"Violence may have its place in life, but not that which we have witnessed in Calcutta, assuming that newspaper accounts are to be trusted. Pakistan of whatever hue does not lie through senseless violence. When I write of senseless violence, I naturally assume the possibility of sensible violence, whatever the latter may be. Calcutta demonstration was not an illustration of sensible violence.

"What senseless violence does is to prolong the lease of the life of British or foreign rule. I believe that the authors of the state paper desire peaceful transfer of power to representative Indian hands. But if we need the use of the British gun and bayonet, the British will not go or, if they do, some other foreign power will take their place. We will make a serious mistake, if every time the British bayonet is used, we trot out the *agent provocateur*. No doubt, he has been at work. Let us not ride that horse to death.

"Calcutta has earned a bad repute of late. It has seen too many wild demonstrations during the past few months. If the evil reputation is sustained for some time longer, it will cease to be the city of palaces, it will become the city of the dead.

"Would that the violence of Calcutta were sterilized and did not become a signal for its spread all over. It depends upon the leaders of the Muslim League, of course, but the rest will not be free from responsibility. They can retaliate or refrain. Refraining is easy and simple, if there is the will. Retaliation is complicated. Will it be tooth against tooth, or many against one?"

On August 24, Gandhi took leave of the inmates of Sevagram ashram with these words: "When the ashram was first started in Kochrab, we set before us certain ideals. Same ideals are before us today. What is our duty in terms of these ideals in the face of the conflagration that is raging in the country today? Let us be humble and confess that we have not got the strength today to meet all the expectations that the people entertain of us. But we are sincerely striving for it. If we had fully realized the principles for which we stand, we should have rushed into the blaze and offered the purest sacrifice which might have conceivably quenched the flames."

Gandhi referred to the lurid happenings in Calcutta and elsewhere. He then proceeded to give his definition of a "pure sacrifice". It was not the thoughtless annihilation of the moth in the flame. Sacrifice to be effective must be backed by the uttermost external and internal purity. And there is nothing that such sacrifice cannot achieve. Without the requisite purity, sacrifice was no better than a desperate self-annihilation devoid of any merit. Sacrifice must, further, be willing and it should be made in faith and hope, without a trace of hatred or ill-will in the heart.

"Although we have fallen short of our ideal," he proceeded to say, "we have never been found wanting in honest endeavour. The art of jail-going we have learnt with the rest. But jail-going is only the beginning, not the end of satyagraha. The acme of satyagraha for us would be to lay down our lives for the defence of India's just cause. Let us then pray to God to give us the requisite purity and fearlessness in the true sense of the term, to make our sacrifice worthy of the altar. Then alone shall we be worthy of the name of ashram."

On August 24, the personnel of the first National Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru was announced. The Viceroy in his broadcast speech appealed to the Muslim League to reconsider its decision and desist from violent words and deeds. The following day, Sir Shafat Ahmed Khan, one of the newly appointed members of the Interim Government, was stabbed and seriously wounded by some Muslim youths.

A meeting of the Congress Working Committee was held in Delhi from August 27 to 30th to consider the situation arising out of the atrocities in Calcutta and elsewhere. The committee adopted the following resolution:

"The Working Committee have read with deep sorrow the reports about recent happenings in Calcutta in connection with the observance by the Muslim League of the Direct Action Day on August 16 and subsequent days. They deplore the serious loss of life and property, and condemn, in particular, the acts of brutality committed against the defenceless persons, especially, women and children. The committee offer their sympathy to the innocent sufferers of whatever community and party, and call upon them to meet the situation with courage, forbearance and fortitude.

"On July 29, the Council of the All-India Muslim League passed a resolution deciding upon direct action. In support of the resolution

inflammatory speeches were made, and subsequently, speeches and statements and pamphlets by responsible members of the League and ministers, and articles in some League newspapers have served to inflame a large section of the Muslim masses.

"The Government of Bengal declared August 16 as a public holiday, in spite of protest, and thereby gave an impression that the observance of August 16 was enjoined by the Government and persons not joining in the observance could claim or get no protection from the Government.

"It appears that processionists carried big bamboo sticks, swords, spears, daggers, axes, which they brandished when ordering people to shut their shops from the early morning of August 16, and mercilessly assaulted anybody, who declined or hesitated to close his shop. Stabbing and looting started early in the day, and guns are said to have been used by the hooligans in many places. Murders in the most brutal circumstances, and the looting and burning of houses on a large scale followed and lasted for three or four days, resulting in the death of several thousand persons and the looting and burning of property worth crores of rupees.

"There was practically no police, nor even the traffic police, to be seen on August 16, and even the precaution of sending the foot and the mounted police to accompany the processions, as is done with the Moharram and other processions, was not taken. Even when the police were available, they rendered no help to the peaceful citizens, and frantic appeals for help to officers in charge of police stations were not heeded and the people were told to save themselves, as best as they could.

"The curfew order was not enforced, even after it was proclaimed, for the first two nights. Although no transport was available to the public, hooligans used motor lorries. Petrol was freely used for committing arson. Houses and furniture and other articles were smashed or burnt, and whatever could be removed was carried away.

"Dead bodies littered the streets, and many dead and dying persons were thrust into man-holes of underground sewers, or thrown into the river. The military were not called, till long after the havoc had commenced. In some places, even the police participated in the looting. After the initial orgy of murders, loot and arson, the Hindus and the others retaliated and indulged in reprisals, wherever they could, and a large number of Muslims were killed.

"It is satisfactory to note, however, that in the midst of mutual slaughter and inhuman barbarities, there were cases where Hindus gave shelter to Muslims in distress, and Muslims gave protection to Hindus in difficulty.

"The Working Committee are concerned to note that the communal tension in other places has increased, and the conflicts resulting in murders have arisen. There is a general apprehension that this may extend and, unless checked in time, may become very widespread. It is the primary duty of every citizen to prevent this, and of every government to maintain peace and ensure protection to its peaceful citizens.

"In view of the very serious nature of the riots, the like of which has never before happened in any part of the country, it is essential, in the opinion of the Working Committee, that a thorough inquiry be held by an impartial tribunal, which can command the full confidence of the public, into the circumstances preceding August 16th and the incidents of August 16 and the following days, and the steps taken by the Government, both before and during the riots, to meet the situation.

"The Working Committee place on record their opinion that the Government of Bengal utterly failed to maintain peace and to give protection of life and property to peaceful citizens.

"The committee realize that the wounds inflicted not only on the bodies but the spirit and self-respect of the people will take long to heal. Nevertheless, the committee appeal to them to forget and forgive and to utilize this terrible experience for re-establishing goodwill and friendly relations between the different communities, which have been so rudely disturbed during the recent times. The committee are of the opinion that the communal problem cannot be solved by intimidation and violence, but by mutual understanding, friendly discussion and, if necessary, by agreed arbitration."

In an editorial entitled "Antidote", Gandhi wrote:

"After giving a graphic description of the recent unfortunate and disgraceful happenings in Calcutta, a correspondent asks: 'What is our duty in such circumstances? The Congress gives no clear instructions to the rank and file in such crises. Sermons on non-violence from afar are of little use. To have offered the non-violent resistance would have meant allowing all property to be destroyed and every Hindu to be killed.'

"The Working Committee of the Congress has given the clearest possible lead in the last sentence of its resolution, published in the newspapers. The fratricide will not abate by 'the intimidation and violence but by mutual understanding and friendly discussion and, if necessary, by agreed arbitration'. One does not need to believe in non-violence as a creed to perceive the truth of this practical proposition. If through deliberate courage the Hindus had died to a man, that would have been deliverance of Hinduism and India and purification of Islam in this land.

"As it was, the third party had to intervene in order to still the mutual savagery. Neither the Muslims nor Hindus concerned have gained by the intervention. Supposing that the Calcutta virus extends to the whole of India, and the British gunpowder keeps the two from stabbing one another, the British power or its substitute will be in possession of India for a long time to come. The length will be measured by the period required by the parties coming to sanity. It will come either by an exhausting mutual fight, independent of the foreign element or by one party eschewing violence, in spite of heaviest odds. Successful mutual strife is obviously impossible in the present state of general ignorance of the use of the modern weapons and their inaccessibility. Non-violence does not require any outside or outward training. It simply requires the will not to kill even in retaliation and the courage to face death without revenge. This is no sermon on ahimsa, but cold reason and the statement of a universal law. Given the unquenchable faith in the law, no provocation should prove too great for the exercise of forbearance. This I have described as non-violence of the brave.

"Unfortunately for us, we are strangers to the non-violence of the brave on a mass scale. Some even doubt the possibility of the exercise of non-violence by groups, much less by masses of people. They restrict its exercise to exceptional individuals. Mankind can have no use for it, if it is always reserved only for individuals.

"Be that as it may, this much is clear that if the people are probably not ready for the exercise of non-violence of the brave, they must be ready for the use of force in self-defence. There should be no camouflage. Self-defence must be pure and simple. Then too, it must never be cowardly or crude. It must, therefore, never be secret. Such is stabbing in the back and evading detection. I am conscious of the fact that we are a people unarmed and untrained in the use

of arms. Opinions will differ as to whether it is good that we are in that position. There can be no denying the fact that no one needs training in the use of arms in self-defence. What is wanted for the purpose is strong arms and stronger will.

"Doing injury to another is obviously violence, but harbouring injury to another and yet unwillingness from cowardice to defend oneself or one's neighbour is also violence and probably worse than the first.

"What then are the leaders to do? What are the new ministers to do? They must ever seek to attain communal harmony—never under threats, ever for its own sake. I regard a Musalman or any non-Hindu as my blood brother, not in order to please him, but because he is born of the same Mother Hind, as I am. He does not cease to be my brother, because he may hate or disown me. I must woo him even, it may be, in spite of himself. The new ministers must resolve never to use British troops, no matter what their hue is, not even the police trained by them. They are not our enemies. But they have been hitherto used not to help the people, but to keep them under the foreign yoke. They should now, as they can, be used for constructive purposes. The military are specially qualified for such work. They are trained and are expected to bring into being the canvas cities in a moment. They know what it is to procure and keep clean water and make perfect sanitary arrangements. No doubt, they know how to kill and be killed in the act. The public know this part of their work only too well. But, it is by no means the most substantial part of their work. It is the background which should be prized, advertised and followed. The animal part of it is inhuman, the other part is essentially human and clean. Let us all copy it and humanize the troops, if we can. The attempt is worth making. It can only be made by those who are not deceived by the glamour that hangs round them and the awe they inspire. This is possible only when we have the courage to face death without revenge or retaliation in mind or deed."

"The aim of our direct action is to paralyse Nehru's Government which will vanish like the historic half-day rule of Nizam the Water-carrier," said Ghazanfar Ali Khan, in Delhi. The meeting passed a resolution condemning the formation of Interim Government without securing the co-operation of the League and warned Britain that "Muslims will resist such a government with their blood."

On September 2, Pandit Nehru and his colleagues took charge of the Interim Government. For Gandhi, it was a day of deep searching. In the early hours of the morning, he set down to draft a note for Nehru, as to the duty of the members of the new Government in this supreme hour. The substance of it he amplified in the evening prayer meeting.

Hailing the auspicious day, for which India had so long waited, as the red-letter day in India's history, he described it as only a step towards complete independence, which was yet to come. He congratulated and thanked the British Government for having resolved an age-old issue between Britain and India by peaceful settlement. Whatever they might have done in the past, this was no time for cavilling at old wrongs or reviving bitter memories.

A friend had asked him as to when the Viceregal palace would be turned into a hospital for the poor, as was promised by him in the presence of the British ministers and the rulers of Indian states at the Round Table Conference in London. He said that he had not forgotten that promise. He stood by it still. Only, the time for it was not yet come. They could not today ask the Viceroy to vacate his palace, while he still held office. Power had not been completely transferred into their hands yet. The Viceroy was still there with the army. Sooner, rather than later, complete power would be in their hands, if Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, their uncrowned king and first Prime Minister, and his colleagues fully and worthily did their part. The Viceroy would then himself vacate his palace and, to be sure, it would be turned into a hospital for the poor, including Harijans, who were the poorest of the poor.

It was not a day for rejoicing or for jubilation, he reminded them. Their ministers had reluctantly agreed to accept responsibility for the Interim Government without the Muslim League, which was undeniably a powerful organization of the Muslims. The League had refused to come in. The Muslims were their brothers. Both Hindus and Muslims were sons of India. Our mortal mother, who gave us birth, was entitled to our reverence and worship. Such worship purified the soul. How much more worthy of our common allegiance and reverence must be our motherland then, the imperishable mother on whose breast we were born and would die? "All those who are born in this country and who claim her as their motherland, whether they be Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Christian, Jain or Sikh are equally

her children and are, therefore, brothers, united together with a bond stronger than that of blood."

Today the Muslims looked askance at the Hindus. And rightly, or wrongly, the Muslim League had come to believe that Hindus had by-passed and deceived it and was, therefore, angry. Muslims were observing the day as a day of mourning. They did not cease to be their brothers on that account. One could not return one's brother's anger with anger. Whilst, therefore, they could not join Muslims in their mourning, it was up to them, Hindus, to try to come as close to them as possible, and spare them provocation by abstaining from jubilation and rejoicing and other exuberant manifestations, such as feasting and illuminations. Exuberant manifestations were hardly in keeping with the solemnity of the occasion. The proper way of observing solemn occasions, as enjoined by Islam, Christianity and Hinduism alike, was by fasting, rather than feasting.

The people should utilize the occasion to turn the searchlight inward, and try to find out if they had really done their Muslim brothers any injustice. If there was any, it should be openly admitted and remedied.

At the same time, he would respectfully tell the League, that it was neither logical nor right to regard both the British and the Hindus as their enemies, and to threaten them with direct action. It could not ride two horses at the same time. If it non-co-operated with the British, it should imply co-operation among themselves. Why then should they non-co-operate with their own brothers? The Congress could never ally itself with Britain against the Muslims. It had today accepted responsibility for the Interim Government for the sole purpose of attaining freedom for all alike, including the Muslim League, not for any particular section or community. If a minister joined the cabinet to serve any sectional interest, to the detriment of the rest or with a desire to injure any particular section, he was unfit to be a minister. It was wrong for the Muslims to regard the Hindus as their enemies, and seek to forget that they had lived together as good neighbours for many centuries, were born in the same land, were nourished by the same soil and were destined to be returned as dust to the same soil. He would go so far as to say that the League attitude was un-Islamic. The remedy for injustice, if there was any, was to reason together or refer the dispute to arbitration in the last resort, if mutual discussion failed.

What was the first duty of the ministers, he next asked and replied that their first act should be to remember the salt satyagraha and remove the salt tax. It was on that issue that the country had given such a noble fight in 1930. It was the Dandi march that had electrified the whole country and had brought the women to the fore. It symbolized the Congress pledge to win freedom for the toiling masses. India's womanhood reached the high watermark during the salt satyagraha and extorted the admiration of the whole world. It was now time to redeem that pledge and make the poor man's salt as free as water and air. It was not the quantum of taxation, but the fact of salt being free or not, that made all the difference to the poor. Removal of salt tax would take the message of swaraj in to the huts of the poorest without distinction of Hindu or Muslim, caste or outcaste, and serve as an earnest of early termination of all oppression under which the masses had been groaning.

The second task before the ministers was the early realization of communal unity. That could not be done by a Government notification. The ministers would have to live for it and die for it. If he had his way, he would declare that hereafter the military would not be used for the preservation of internal peace. Personally, he would like to see even the use of the police banned for that purpose. People must find other means to prevent the communities from flying at each other's throat. If the worst came to the worst, they must have the guts to fight it out among themselves without external aid. He ventured to say that so long as they needed the help of the British arms for their security, their slavery would continue.

Then there was the total eradication of untouchability. As early as 1920, the Congress had declared untouchability to be a blot on Hinduism. They were pledged to remove it root and branch. The conditions of life in the sweepers' quarters in all big cities of India was a shame. Before this, he used to appeal to the Viceroy to improve them. Now, it was the responsibility of Interim Government and they could call the ministers to account for it.

Lastly, there was the pledge of khadi to be redeemed to provide clothing to the poor villagers. The Congress by a resolution in 1920 had resolved that all the inhabitants of India must be clothed in hand-spun and hand-woven cloth to the exclusion of all other. The Congress was still pledged to it. They had not yet carried out that resolution. Instead, the people grumbled that they could not produce

yarn which was required for the purchase of khadi under the new A.-I.S.A. regulations. Wherefrom was the khadi to come, if people did not spin? They must spin for themselves. There was no other way. It was the solemn duty of the members of Interim Government to redeem the pledge about khadi and to see that nothing but khaddar was used in their homes or in their offices. As for yarn required to purchase khadi, he made them a sporting offer. The new A.-I.S.A. rules allowed them to present yarn spun by friends for the purchase of khadi, but not yarn spun for wages. As their friend, he would, out of yarn presented to him by the people, undertake to provide them with all the yarn that they might require for the purchase of khadi. There was no doubt a dearth of khadi in the khadi bhandars; but he would try his best to carry out their orders. He, however, warned them that it might be only coarse khadi for the present and they would have to be satisfied with that. He could not guarantee to provide them with fine Andhra khadi. For that, they must wait till India was completely independent.

He hoped fervently that the Interim Government would give the right lead and put India on the road to truth and purity and real swaraj. In that endeavour, he hoped, it would have the loyal co-operation of all Indians.

Gandhi remarked that the people had a right to hope that now their country would become the land where there was no sorrow and no suffering. That consummation would not be brought about merely by their ministers wearing the crown of thorns. That land, as the poet had sung, was within us. It was within the power of everyone to raise himself or herself above the sphere of sorrow and suffering by fulfilling certain conditions, and if many people did that in India, we should realize the dream of a society in which there was no sorrow and suffering. But today alas! the people were filled with fear and anger. Brother quarrelled with brother and returned anger for anger and blow for blow. What could their ministers do? Were the ministers expected to send the military and the police to protect them? The whole atmosphere was rotten. The offices and staff had been multiplied a hundredfold. No wonder, that bribery and corruption were rampant.

If they did not purify themselves within and without, they would make government impossible for their ministers and displace the very men, whom they had put in power.

Again how could their country become the land without sorrow and regrets while their bhangi brethren continued to be oppressed? It pained him to hear and read of the persecution of Harijans in the villages. If there was an epidemic, they were beaten. They could not draw water from wells. They lived in hovels. This state of affairs may not exist in the country of our dreams. All human beings are one in the sight of God, and they must look upon Harijans as no less members of the great human family than they themselves were.

Soon after the new ministers assumed office, Gandhi received a note in which some Englishmen had expressed their fear that the lovely gardens of the houses, formerly occupied by the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, would now suffer neglect. There would be no flowers, grass would be allowed to grow anyhow where there were velvety lawns and the compound would be untidy. The carpets, chairs and other furniture would probably be ruined by oil or grease stains, the lavatories would be dirty. Gandhi said that having lived in England and South Africa and known Englishmen well, he could be witness to the fact that cultured English people do understand and observe the laws of sanitation and hygiene. English officials were living in palaces as kings. They kept a huge staff of servants to keep their houses and surroundings clean. The people's leaders had gone to the Interim Government as people's servants. They were of the people and one with them. There was no need for them to depend on a large staff of servants. They would be untrue to their calling, if they did. But they could and should keep their houses and surroundings spotlessly clean by self-help. The women of their household would be their caretakers with themselves and he knew that not one of the leaders would hesitate to clean their own lavatories. A lady doctor had complained years ago, that while the Viceroy's House was a palace and spotlessly clean, the quarters of his staff of Harijans were a very different show. The people's leaders would make no such difference. One of Nehru's personal staff, a Harijan, had been an M.L.A. They treated their servants as members of the family. He would not be happy, unless the ministers of the nation maintained the highest standards in every department of life, and he was sure, they would not disappoint the nation.

One of the new ministers was describing to Gandhi how Nehru had to wade through 500 to 800 wires every day and an equal number was probably being received by the Viceroy. Characterizing

the practice as a foolish waste of money, as well as of the Viceroy's and their ministers' precious time, Gandhi described in one of his prayer addresses how, at one time, people used to send wires to the King of England, little realizing that as a constitutional monarch, he was bound by the advice of his ministers.

Time was when the Viceroy was all-powerful and could do everything. But now the Viceroy had of his own free will relegated his powers to the cabinet of which, like the King of England, he was the constitutional head. The King of England could not do anything without the consent of his ministers. The people of England had even beheaded one monarch, because he went against their will. He hoped that the people's ministers here would never do anything of the kind, because they had now in their possession the matchless weapon of satyagraha, should occasion ever arise for its use. In any case, the people who sent the wires, should realize that apart from burdening the recipients and telegraph offices, they were wasting people's money. The well-to-do imagined it was their money, but it really belonged to the starving masses whom they exploited.

Gandhi then turned to the continued strife in Bombay. He did not know who killed whom. But it was tragic that some people even rejoiced that Hindus were now strong enough to kill in return those who tried to kill them. He would far rather that Hindus died without retaliation, for that was the way to quench the fire of hatred. But, today, they had neither that valour nor that non-violence or love in their hearts. Demand for more and more military and police protection was pouring in from all sides. To quarrel among themselves was bad enough. But far worse was to call in troops whom the British had trained and whose oath of allegiance was to the British King. He did not want the people to ask the Government anywhere for military and police protection. People must generate their own strength and not rely on anyone else. If they insisted on being provided with the military and police help, the ministers should resign rather than comply with a request that would strangle independence at its very inception. Instead, they and their leaders should be willing to go into the fray and lay down their lives for the sake of Hindu and Muslim honour. As for the military, they should be harnessed to all kinds of constructive work, at which they were adepts. Let the military grow more food for the starving millions, and do all kinds of other work that was waiting to be done.

Some members of the Delhi municipality and business men had come and complained that in Delhi it was the Chief Commissioner's and Deputy Commissioner's raj. He had told them that the remedy lay in their own hands. They should go to the municipality for service only, with no personal end to serve. He was afraid they would not be able to stand that test. They had many sins of omission and commission to answer for. As elected representatives in the municipality, they were responsible for the Harijan hovels and the dirt and squalor of Delhi. Business men and contractors exploited the poor. If communal strife occurred, it was the citizens who were responsible. The day for the commissioner's raj was over. It must now be people's raj, but people must be alive to their responsibilities.

The rising tide of communal hatred, passion and violence and, as a result, false propaganda in the country made him open out his heart to his prayer audience on the following day. It had hurt him to hear some of the recent pronouncements of the Qaid-e-Azam and his lieutenants. They went on saying they would take what they wanted by force. He wondered where this was going to lead the ship of the state. Congressmen might have the reins of power in their hands, but this had only increased their duties and responsibilities a hundredfold. While the Congress was in the wilderness, they were arrested, beaten and punished, and even killed; but that was past history for the time being, at any rate. If the Congress had resorted to violence, then they would have fallen. The only true suffering was that which did not retaliate and it alone could bear fruit. Moreover, the forty crores of India, village India, did not think in terms of violence. They were slaves. Violence today was in the hearts of a handful of townspeople. He said that as a villager, he became one with the ocean of Indian humanity and the Congress had taken office for the sake of this suffering humanity. He had espoused the Hindu-Muslim cause, long before he had any Muslim friends. He went to South Africa in charge of a case for the Muslim friends of his brother. He went to South Africa to earn his living, but he soon put service first. He became a coolie barrister, in order to serve his labourer friends there and he really served the Hindus through the Muslims whose employee he was. Hindu-Muslim unity was part of his very being. The memory of those days was full of fragrance for him. Even today, although the communal differences had raised their head there too, all were fighting as one man for Indian rights. He

recalled stalwart Muslims who had joined the satyagraha movement. He, therefore, wondered and was hurt when the Qaid-e-Azam and his disciples called Hindus their enemies.

He was not a Muslim, but he claimed that Islam did not teach enmity to any man. If he were, as he believed, a true Hindu, he was equally a good Christian and a good Sikh and a good Jain too. No religion taught man to kill fellow man, because he held different opinions or was of another religion, and yet this was what was being done. No man could look upon another as his enemy, unless he first became his own enemy. The Muslim League leaders talked of forcing the Congress and the Hindus and even the British to yield to their demands. This surely was not the right way. He recalled with pride the days of the Khilafat. What a sad change was there today! He longed for those days when Muslims and Hindus never did anything without consulting each other. What could he do to bring that state of affairs back again, was the main question that was worrying him all the time. He made bold to say that for any Hindu or Muslim to regard the other community as "enemy" was not only disloyal but stupid too. He appealed to Englishmen too not to imagine that they could keep them apart. If they did, they were disloyal to both India and Britain. Hindus and Muslims were all sons of the same soil, blood brothers, who ate the same food, drank the same water and talked the same language. They had to live together. The Qaid-e-Azam said that all minorities would be safe in Pakistan. There was already Muslim raj in the Punjab and Bengal and Sind. But did it augur well for future peace, if things happened in these provinces as threatened? Did the Muslim League imagine it was going to keep Islam alive through the sword? If so, it was much mistaken. The very word Islam meant peace. And he maintained that no religion worthy of the name could exist, except on terms of peace.

Shankarrao Deo complained: "Many people do not understand why those who call themselves satyagrahis resort to the use of military and police, the moment they become ministers. People feel this is a breach of both the creed and the policy of ahimsa."

Gandhi replied: "From my point of view, the answer is simple. I have been saying for some time, that the words 'truth and non-violence' should be removed from the Congress constitution. But, whether they are actually removed or not, let us assume that they

are and then we shall be able to come to an independent judgement on the rightness or the wrongness of any action. I am convinced that so long as we have to rely on the use of the military and even the police for preserving internal order, we shall continue to remain the slaves of either Britain or some other foreign power. It then matters little, whether the Government is in the hands of Congress or non-Congressmen. Let us assume that Congress ministers are not pledged to non-violence. Let us further assume that Hindus, Muslims and others want military and police protection. If they do, they will continue to receive it. Those ministers who are wedded to non-violence must resign, since they would object to the use of the military and police. The significance of it all is that so long as our people have not the wisdom to come to a mutual understanding, so long will goondaism continue and we shall not be able to generate the true strength of ahimsa within us. So long as we have not cultivated the strength to die with courage and love in our hearts, we cannot hope to develop the ahimsa of the strong.

"There remains the question whether, in an ideal society, there should be any or no government. I do not think, we need worry ourselves about this at the moment. If we continue to work for such a society, it will slowly come into being to an extent, such that the people can benefit by it. Euclid's line is one without breadth, but no one has so far been able to draw it and never will. All the same it is only by keeping the ideal line in mind that we have made progress in geometry. What is true here is true of every ideal.

"It must be remembered that nowhere in the world does a state without government exist. If at all it could ever come into being, it would be in India; for, ours is the only country where the attempt has, at any rate, been made. We have not yet been able to show that bravery to the degree which is necessary, and for the attainment of which, there is only one way. Those who have faith in the latter have to demonstrate it. In order to do so, the fear of death has to be completely shed, just as we have shed the fear of prisons."

# *Charkha Jayanti*

## 1946

"INDIA is on the march to independence. And it is coming, whether there is agreement between the League and the Congress or not. No one can stop it. It is her destiny. India has bled enough for it." In these words, Gandhi reiterated his faith in India's destiny to a British correspondent, who asked whether co-operation between the Congress and the League would not help the attainment of independence and was not, therefore, desirable. "If there is heart co-operation between the two, progress will be quicker and smoother," he said. "But it must be real heart unity, not a make-believe."

Gandhi began by telling the pressman, what he considered to be the function of journalism: "There are occasions, when a journalist serves his profession best by his silence."

"But it is a journalist's job to purvey the facts and let the public judge for itself," the journalist argued. Did not Gandhi believe in the capacity of the average man to judge correctly, provided he had enough knowledge of facts? But Gandhi demurred: "Not knowledge of facts. What passes for facts is only impressions or estimates of things, and estimates vary. Hence, one gets different versions of the same event." As an illustration, he mentioned the parable of seven blind men of Hindustan, each one describing the elephant differently and each one believing himself to be right: "What is really needed to make democracy function is not the knowledge of facts, but right education. And the true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock the public mind with wanted and unwanted impressions. A journalist has, therefore, to use his discretion, as to what to report and when. As it is, the journalists are not content to stick to the facts alone. Journalism has become the art of 'intelligent anticipation of events.' "

"As a public man and as a social reformer," continued Gandhi, "it is for me to judge when to say something and when to hold my

tongue." The best contribution that he could make to world peace, he said, speaking of himself, was to be forgotten. "What the world needs is not words, but action. Actions and thoughts tell far more than speech. And this applies to all men both great and small."

"What do you think of Russia?"

"Russia is an enigma to me," said Gandhi. "It hurts me to think, if the reports are true, that a country which stood for the people has turned into an imperialist power. But I may not pass judgement on a great people and a great man like Stalin. I lack the data."

"Is the world progressing? Has the making of life and struggle for existence easier in the modern world resulted in the dulling of man's instincts and sensibilities?"

"If that is your comment, I will subscribe to it," said Gandhi.

"And the atom bomb?"

"On that point," Gandhi said, "you can proclaim to the whole world without hesitation, that I am beyond repair. I regard the employment of the atom bomb for the wholesale destruction of men, women and children, as the most diabolical use of science."

"What is the antidote? Has it antiquated non-violence?"

"No," said Gandhi. "On the contrary, non-violence is the only thing that is now left in the field. It is the only thing that the atom bomb cannot destroy. I did not move a muscle, when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to myself, 'Unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind.' "

"What would be your fatherly advice to a young man about to launch into the world," was the next question.

"To hold his tongue," replied Gandhi and further added, "was it not Shakespeare who said, 'Lend everybody thine ear, thy voice to none?' "

"You followed that policy fairly in your own case," put in the journalist.

"Yes," said Gandhi. "I used to think in my early days that I was a dunce and an idiot, that I should never be able to speak. Now I feel thankful for that disability."

"You have been a fighter all your life. What has fighting done for you?" asked the journalist.

"It has braced me for the next struggle," said Gandhi. "Fighting has done me good. What it has done to others, I do not know."

"Considering that the difference between the Muslim League and the Congress has narrowed down to one or two basic issues," said the journalist, reverting to the earlier question, "would it not be better to make a little sacrifice to secure agreement?"

"You cannot sacrifice a principle to gain a doubtful advantage," replied Gandhi.

"After hearing both sides of the controversy, an outsider feels at sea. The only course, it seems, is to suspend judgement under the circumstances."

"When two parties cannot agree and both are sincere in their convictions, it is clear one of them must be wrong," said Gandhi. "Both cannot be right. The world must be the arbiter in that case. It dare not withhold judgement. It has often been found in the progress of non-violence that even people who want to be perfectly just come to wrong judgement."

Before taking leave, the journalist offered his congratulations in advance on Gandhi's coming birthday.

"I attach no importance to it," said Gandhi. "Every day, one is reborn. I, at any rate, am."

Preparations were being made to celebrate his seventy-seventh birthday on a big scale. A partial fulfilment of the goal, for which millions had suffered and worked under his leadership during the last two decades, called forth several suggestions from the public and the leaders. His own suggestion was made editorially in an article entitled "Charkha Jayanti".

"What is known as Charkha Jayanti is not Gandhi Jayanti even though the date always coincides with the day of my birth. The reason for this is clear. In ancient times, charkha had nothing to do with independence. If anything, it had a background of slavery. Poor women used perforce to have to spin, in order to get even a piece of dry bread. They used to get such cowrie shells as the government of the day chose to throw at them. I remember, in my childhood, watching the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot, literally throw money to the poor on a particular day. I used to enjoy the fun which it was to me. I can picture in my imagination how, in olden times, the poor spinners would have a few shells thrown at them, which they would pick up greedily.

"In 1909, in South Africa, I conceived the idea that if poverty-stricken India were to be freed from the alien yoke, she must learn

to look upon the spinning wheel and hand-spun yarn as the symbol, not of slavery but of freedom. It should also mean butter to bread. It took very little time to bring home this truth to Shri Narandas Gandhi and he has, therefore, understood the true significance of Charkha Jayanti. My birthday, so far as I know, was never celebrated before the date got connected with the Charkha Jayanti. In South Africa, where I had become fairly known, no one ever took any notice of it. It was here that it was joined with Charkha Jayanti. The English day of my birthday has also been included. Therefore, Jayanti Week this year is being celebrated from September 22 to October 2. Shri Narandas Gandhi has played the chief role in this and, as I write these lines, the days of celebration come to mind. In my opinion, however, the real celebration will come only when the music of the wheel, which is the symbol of independence and non-violence, will be heard in every home. If a few or even a crore of poor women spin in order to earn a pittance, what can the celebration mean to them and what achievement can that be? This can well happen, even under a despotic rule, and is today visible, wherever capital hold sway. Millionaires are sustained by the charity they dole out to the poor, may be even in the form of wages.

"The celebration will only be truly worthwhile, when the rich and the poor alike understand that all are equal in the eyes of God, that each one, in his own place, must earn his bread by labour, and that the independence of all will be protected, not by guns and ammunition but by the bullets, in the shape of cones of hand-spun yarn, that is, not by violence but by non-violence.

"If we consider the atmosphere in the world today, it may sound ludicrous. But if we look within, this is the truth and the eternal truth. For the moment, it is Shri Narandas Gandhi and the other devotees of the charkha, who are trying to demonstrate it through their faith. Let all understand and celebrate the *jayanti* in the same spirit as fires these devoted workers."

A charkha class was conducted in the bhangi colony for eleven days ending on September 21. In order to create enthusiasm among the people, an exhibition of all the processes of spinning was held on 22nd. All charkhas, from the early village wheel to the modern Yeravda, Kisan and Magan charkhas, triangular bamboo charkha were on view, as also the implements of carding, including the bow with both gut and thread and the bamboo knife. There was also a

special charkha for the spinning of wool. In one section, there were exhibits of different species of cotton and yarn of various counts. A tree of Devkapas was on view, as well as pictures of charkhas, *taklis* and carding implements. Near-by lay a heap of seventy-eight lakhs of hanks of yarn for presentation to Gandhi.

The birthday celebration on September 22, 1946 in the sweepers' colony consisted mostly of spinning activities. Collective spinning was held there. Nehru, Ghaffar Khan, Rajendra Prasad took part for half an hour.

That day's programme was to open with flag-hoisting ceremony which was to be performed by Rajendra Prasad. A worker who was in charge of the programme had planned to have the refreshments served to Harijan children and the volunteers after the ceremony. Gandhi came to know of it just by chance, early in the morning. It gave him a shock. It seemed to him that the inwardness of the spinning wheel had been forgotten by his comrades. "The music of the charkha murmurs sweetly," he explained at the evening prayer gathering, "that we were all one, born to be the equal sharers in the goods of the earth, with no one higher or wealthier than the other. Yet the world is today full of inequalities of wealth and invidious distinctions of high and low. This is a great folly. In our arrogance we forget that we are all one day going to be levelled with the dust by death that knows no distinctions." The second lesson was that we were to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow—what a Russian savant had called "bread labour" and, the third was that if we were one of and with the people, we should refuse to give food to those who were not in need, or to take more than we needed for health. If we all did that, there would be no scarcity of food in this land and we would refuse to look across the seas for foodstuffs. Yet, his nearest comrades were about to make the mistake of serving refreshments to volunteers and Harijans, who were not in need of such. Was it not criminal to fritter away the foodstuffs that would serve to keep alive twenty men, to provide titbits to Harijans and volunteers who were certainly not suffering the pangs of hunger? They were deceiving themselves, if they thought that thereby they served the Harijans. The real hunger of Harijans, which needed to be satisfied was not for morsels of food but for decent living as self-respecting equal citizens for a square deal as human beings, for freedom from fear, for inculcation of clean and sanitary habits, thrift, industry,

and education. That required perseverance, self-sacrifice and patient intelligent labouring on our part. If they gave him money to feed Harijans, he would refuse to accept it. For, he did not want to make beggars and idlers of them. He pointedly referred to the fact that Rajendra Prasad was their Food Member who wanted to save for the famishing people every morsel of food. In the circumstances he wondered, whether the oversight of his comrades was not due to his being lax with himself. Was he not allowing himself to partake rather too freely of the fruits that were placed before him? That lesson, he remarked, was a grave warning for all, if we were to learn truly the lesson of the charkha.

Gandhi was in the habit of giving instructions separately for each meal, the menu being strictly regulated according to his physical condition—conditions of rest and work in prospect, mental strain and such other factors. That evening, he scribbled out instructions that the juice of sour limes, instead of the usual orange juice, was to be served with his milk. What right had he to use oranges, when he could possibly do with sour limes and jaggery?

Gandhi's diary that night contained the following entry: "The inwardness of spinning wheel seems to have been forgotten. I was angry. I have to consider what my duty under the circumstances is. It seems to be so very hard to maintain detachment of mind in the midst of this raging fire. My heart-searching continues."

"I am filled with agitation," he said to a friend in the course of a talk. "Why could not I suffer this inner anguish with unruffled calmness of spirit? I am afraid I have not the detachment required for living up to 125 years. That also explains why the charkha and khadi are making such slow progress. Success of khadi is impossible without infinite patience. A burning passion coupled with absolute detachment is the key to all success."

Dealing with food shortage, Gandhi wrote:

"There is nothing so depressing as when fear pervades the atmosphere. I remember an occasion when the waters of the Sabarmati were rising fairly high and a message said to be from Sardar Patel was received after midnight to the effect that, inside of an hour, the ashram would be covered with the rising waters and that we were likely to be drowned in them, if we did not vacate. It was a most anxious time for all of us, men, women and children. A sigh of relief went up to heaven, when it was discovered that after causing some

loss to property, the angry waters had begun to subside and that no loss of life need be feared.

"Precisely in the same manner, the danger of shortage reported from authoritative quarters bids fair to demoralize us into a panic which would be more fatal than real starvation. Such was my plight when a paragraph in the newspapers was read to me that of all the places in the world its intrepid dewan had seriously contended that Travancore had a storage of food grains only for a fortnight. Knowing Travancore so well, I imagined all sorts of calamities, not merely for Travancore, but for the whole of India. Travancore with its luxuriant growth of edible tubers, coconut and fish had no need to starve for a single day, even though Travancore might have no other supply from the other parts of India. My faith in Travancore kept me whole. And to my joy, I discovered that the shortage was not of food, but of wheat and rice only. Travancore can grow rice, not wheat. And so far as the cereals are concerned, the inhabitants of Travancore are rice-eaters. They take to wheat with difficulty and under stress only. Would that the present distress could make us shed our provincialisms and induce all-India habits, so as to make us feel fully at home, no matter which part of India we happened to find ourselves in. For the moment, however, my object would be fully served, if all responsible men in India would definitely tell the people in their respective provinces and districts and states, not to look beyond India for supply of food, but to grow what they can themselves and learn to eke out a living from their own produce. And, if the numerous authentic letters I receive are an indication of things as they are or should be, we need fear no starvation for want of life-giving vegetables plus a little milk for vegetarians, and fish, flesh or fowl for non-vegetarians.

"Let India realize that, as yet, we have no appreciable quantity of food from outside our shores. Many are willing to help, but they are themselves for the most part sufferers, or they have more calls on them than they are able to cope with. The transport difficulty is very real for all of them, and our own will commence when the foodstuff reaches our shores. The internal transport and the distribution constitute a problem by themselves. It is, therefore, practical wisdom to brace ourselves for the struggle and to declare with one voice our resolve that we shall grow our eatables for ourselves and perish bravely in the attempt, if we must.

"This is the only way and no other."

"Are you full of the joy of life? Why do you want to live for 125 years?" asked an American correspondent. He was surprised, when Gandhi told him that his desire to live up to 125 years was not for enjoyment but for service. "Both are not the same," he explained and proceeded to expound to the puzzled interviewer the doctrine of "enjoyment through renunciation".

"And when did your real enjoyment of life begin," inquired the American next.

"When I was born."

"No. I mean when did that pattern of life begin, when service became a joy for ever."

"When I understood the inner meaning of life."

"Is that India's speciality?"

"The only speciality of India is her poverty, as America's is her glamour of riches," said Gandhi.

"May not there be occasions, when one may have to compromise ideals with expediency?" was the next question.

"No, never. I do not believe that end justifies the means."

"Is it possible that your activities may some day be removed from the political field?"

"Perhaps, you do not know," said Gandhi, "that I felt compelled to come into the political field, because I found that I could not do even social work without touching politics. I feel that the political work must be looked upon in terms of social and moral progress. In democracy, no part of life is untouched by politics. Under the British, you cannot escape politics in the good sense. It embraces the whole life. All who breathe must pay a tax. That is the British rule in India. Take the salt tax for instance. It concerns everybody. The collector of revenue and policeman are the only symbols by which millions in India's villages know the British rule. One cannot sit still while the people are being ravaged."

"Then your job will never be finished," said the journalist.

"It will be finished only with my death," said Gandhi. "I must be watchful, whether it is the foreign government that is in power or indigenous, if I am a social reformer in the true sense of the term. This is applicable to all."

"When men attain power they drift away from the people. What about here?" asked the journalist.

"Let us hope and pray that this will never happen here. I have likened our people's office acceptance to wearing a crown of thorns and pretty sharp thorns at that."

"Do you ever feel depressed?" asked the journalist.

"I believe in an over-ruling power, as I believe I am talking to you just now. This may be unreal, but that is real. It dominates me and enables me to remain calm even in the midst of storm."

The journalist next asked his opinion about predestination.

"That is a much-abused word. It is true that we are not quite as free, as we imagine. Our past holds us. But like all other doctrines this may well be ridden to death."

This provoked the question as to how to overcome the unpleasant effects of one's predestination, since predestination was a reality.

"By taking the pleasant with the unpleasant in perfect detachment and thereby sterilizing the unpleasant of its sting, even as you have tackled the problem of the prickly pear by removing its thorn through judicious selection and cultivation and converting it into edible fodder for cattle," said Gandhi.

"How to prevent the next war?" was the last question.

"By doing the right thing," replied Gandhi, "irrespective of what the world will do. Each individual must act according to his ability without waiting for others, if he wants to move them to act. There comes a time when an individual becomes irresistible and his action becomes all-pervasive in its effect. This comes, when he reduces himself to zero."

"If the third war comes," he added, "it will be the end of the world. The world cannot stand a third war. For me, the second war has not stopped, it still goes on."

The press reports of killings and stabbings everywhere continued to darken the horizon during the week. "We are passing through trying times," said Gandhi in the course of one of his prayer addresses. "There is news of stabbings in Calcutta, Dacca, Allahabad, Bombay and so on. What is more, all this is done in the name of religion. How the stabbing and murder of the innocents, whether aggressive or retaliatory, can help the cause of religion, I fail to understand. The spirit of religion requires us to make Him a witness of our littlest of little acts. In Mira's song, that has just been sung at the prayer, the devotee prays to God to come to his aid and deliver him from distress. For He alone can do so, none else. Let us pray to God then

to deliver us from our distress. If our prayer is sincere, we will rely on Him entirely and put away the sword. And if even one party did so, violence would cease."

Gandhi told the prayer audience that an esteemed Bengali friend, had put him some questions as to how they should act at such times as Calcutta had recently been through. His reply was that Hindus and Muslims should both cease to rely on the use of the knife and stick for their protection, and make suffering without retaliation their shield and they will be safe. He said that he was daily receiving letters from friends to say that some relative or the other had died. He wrote to all that they should not mourn, nor should they expect him to mourn with them. "If we have a living faith in God," he observed, "we will realize that it is the mortal body that perishes, never the immortal spirit within. Man is born to die. And death is the natural corollary to birth." So whether God sent them natural death or whether they were killed by the assassin's knife, they must go smiling to their end. There would not then be knives or sticks in evidence everywhere, as they were today.

Khadi, prohibition and the eradication of untouchability had for many years been part and parcel of the Congress programme. So it gave Gandhi particular satisfaction to announce, in the course of one of his prayer addresses, that Shri T. Prakasam, the Premier of Madras, and his ministry had undertaken to carry out big schemes in regard to all the three in the Madras Province. Before giving his final approval to the khadi scheme, he had asked for an assurance that no more textile mills would be erected. He warned Congress ministries that their khadi schemes would be a sham and an eyewash, if at the same time they went on planting fresh textile mills in their provinces.

"The Congress leaders have to be true to their word and pure of heart," he remarked. "They may not be tempted by crores. They must be willing to go smiling to the gallows, if need be, for the sake of principles." Textile mills had been started everywhere, even before the last war. The provinces were being asked to start new ones. The machinery for them would be costly, but the money that was supposed to follow in their wake was the lure. He explained how he thought textile mills were as poison for village India and, therefore, to be avoided. People might wonder how he lived as a guest of a millowner—but these millowners had, in spite of his strong views,

taken him in as one of their family, and non-violence demanded tolerance and love for all, even if they differed from one. Prakasam had promised him that he would not be tempted with new textile mills for Madras and he would even hope to eliminate the existing ones, as soon as the khadi spirit prevailed.

On "Hand-Spinning *v.* Mill-Spinning", Gandhi wrote:

"Sometime before the provincial ministries throughout India were formed, I had heard that the quotas of spindles were offered to the provinces on pain—if a particular province did not take its quota—of the refused quota being transferred to the other provinces. Now that the provincial administrations are in full swing, the question has arisen as to whether these governments can admit new mills and, at the same time, promote hand-spinning on a national scale. My answer is emphatically in the negative, if the encouragement of hand-spinning is meant to be sincere. Behind the India-wide quota is the fundamental belief that the mills alone can and must supply India's needs for cloth and that hand-spun may be permitted to exist for the fastidious few. That was not how hand-spinning was conceived in the Congress resolutions and that certainly is not the way that the A.-I.S.A. has progressed. If the national governments have come to the conclusion that hand-spinning has and should have no future, then they should not waste a single rupee along the lines followed by the A.-I.S.A. If, on the other hand, they share the belief of the A.-I.S.A., they should forgo their quota even if the forgoing should involve some initial loss. The loss will be demonstrably for the future gain of the masses.

"Another question has arisen as to why the Working Committee should not, at any rate, declare a uniform policy to be followed by all the Congress provinces. There is nothing to prevent the committee from doing so. But it is open to them to say that the Congress policy has been enunciated times without number. Each province has to measure its own belief in the Congress scales. The Working Committee might not go into details.

"Then why may not the Central Government lay down a policy? The answer is quite obvious. The Central Government represents all India and all parties. It may not, therefore, lay down any exclusively Congress policy, much less a policy in a matter wholly within the jurisdiction of the provinces. It would be an unwarranted interference with the rights of provinces.

"Looked at from all points of view, in the matter of khadi, as of prohibition and other subjects allotted to provinces, the provinces must evolve along their own lines. They will miserably fail, if they look to the committee to guide them. The Central Government has simply not the right, even if it had the unholy wish."

A meeting of the A.-I.C.C. was held in Delhi on September 23 to ratify the steps taken by the Working Committee in the formation of the Interim Government. Nehru resigned the Presidentship of the Congress and handed over charge to J. B. Kripalani.

The presidents and secretaries of the various provincial Congress committees met together to hear Gandhi. Instead of delivering an address, he invited questions.

Question: "Wrangling and corrupt practices have today become a common feature of our elections. What should be the attitude of Congressmen with regard to the elections?"

Gandhi: "What you say only shows that we seek the leadership instead of being servants of the nation. There can be no room for wrangles, when service is the ideal. Congressmen should realize that only a few can become leaders, the goal for all Congressmen to set before themselves can only be to qualify as true servants of the nation. An institution that suffers from a plethora of leaders is surely in a bad way. For instance, if every Khudai Khidmatgar aspired to become the chief, it would make the life of Badshah Khan hell besides disrupting the Khudai Khidmatgar organization itself.

"If the Congressmen lived up to the creed which they professed, the attainment of swaraj through truthful and non-violent means, paraphrased in the Congress constitution by the words 'peaceful and legitimate', there should be no wrangling and no corruption. The existence of election wrangles and the irregular practices is thus only a proof that the Congress policy of 'the attainment of swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means' is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. I have, therefore, suggested that it should be dropped in the amended constitution that is to come into being. Pending the setting up of the new constitution, I have suggested a plan of work which does away with elections for the time being and which requires all Congressmen to be active servants. If it is adopted, it should cut across all our difficulties and troubles."

Question: "Very few representatives of the minorities have been returned at the elections. What remedy do you suggest?"

Gandhi: "Minorities being a minority, their representation in the Congress organization will naturally be proportionately less. If they feel dissatisfied, they can keep out of the Congress without ceasing to be Congressmen, as I have done. It is my claim that I am not less a Congressman but more by reason of my ceasing to be even a four-anna member of the Congress. At the Faizpur Congress, the question was raised by Anasuyabai Kale at a gathering at which I was present. On interrogation, it was found that the number of those who were four-anna members was very small. But in reply to the question as to how many in the gathering were not four-anna members, forest of hands went up. These are the real Congressmen seeking no reward, but seeking ever to serve it. Bereft of them, the Congress would dwindle into a parlour show. The only worthy aim of a Congressman can be to belong wholly to the Congress, never to capture and to dominate the Congress. If everybody took up the correct attitude, there would be no minorities and no majorities. To try to 'capture' the Congress would be to kill the Congress. And a Congressman, who is worthy of his salt, would die rather than be guilty of the murder."

Question: "Policy of the Interim Government is to keep down the prices of food grains. Would it not adversely affect the production of food grains?"

Gandhi: "I want to reduce the prices of food grains still further. I claim to be a peasant myself and I know that only a fraction of the price paid by the consumer actually reaches the grower of food. It should be the business of the Interim Government that the tiller of the soil gets the full value of his produce and that every pie paid by the consumer reaches the peasant's pocket or else it should get out. The Interim Government can never be guilty of wishing to provide cheap food grains to the consumer at the expense of the grower of food. The trouble with the cultivator is not low prices, but the middleman.

"Even in the khadi production, I set the target of eight annas a day for the spinners. We actually reached the rate of four annas in spite of the objection that dear khadi would spell the ruin of the khadi production. That illustrates my attitude towards the producer. I would eliminate the middleman altogether. It is he who sponges today upon the agriculturist. Otherwise, there is no reason why the peasant should starve. At the same time, a peasant who profiteers

or exploits the black market belies his calling. He is no less an exploiter than the zamindar."

Question: "The growth of parties in the Congress organization is having a very adverse effect on the Congress organization. What is the remedy?"

Gandhi: "There can be only one party in the Congress, that of the Congressmen and no other. That is not to say that there is no room in the Congress for individuals or for groups holding different opinions. I do not believe in dead uniformity. 'All men are born equal and free' is not nature's law in the literal sense. All men are not born equal in intellect, for instance, but the doctrine of equality will be vindicated if those who have superior intellect will use it not for self-advancement at the expense of others, but for the service of those who are less favoured in that respect than they. Today there are all sorts within the Congress. That is why I have suggested the removal of the words 'peaceful and legitimate' from the Congress objective. But that need not mean the abandonment of truth and non-violence by Congressmen. The object is only to purge out hypocrisy. It jars. Let those who believe in the doctrine of the sword openly avow it. To take the name of non-violence, when there is sword in your heart, is not only hypocritical and dishonest, but cowardly. Our non-violence *vis-a-vis* the British Government has been the non-violence of the weak. Otherwise, why should there be all these wrangles among ourselves? We try to justify the disorganization and chaos in our midst by pointing to the example of the 'squatters' in England, forgetting that a blind imitation would not help us. There is nothing more demoralizing than fake non-violence of the weak and impotent. If we had the requisite non-violence in us, our public life would be characterized by the utmost toleration. There will then be room for as many parties as there are opinions. Differences of opinion would be an indication of healthy independence of mind which is the law of life, not party intrigues and party strife. The latter are incompatible with independence."

Question: "How should Hindu-Muslim question be tackled?"

Gandhi: "I must own defeat on that point. I know that mine is today a voice in the wilderness and yet I claim that mine is the only practicable solution. I cannot subscribe to the view that because certain members of a particular community have indulged in inhuman acts, therefore the whole community may be condemned

outright and put beyond the pale. The Muslim League may call Hindus names and declare India to be *Dar-ul-Harb*, where the law of jehad operates, and all Muslims who co-operate with the Congress as Quislings, fit only to be exterminated. But we must not cease to aspire, in spite of this wild talk, to befriend all Muslims and hold them fast as prisoners of our love. It would be a present possibility if the Hindus in their lakhs offered themselves to be cut to pieces without retaliation or anger in their hearts. Non-violence is today rightly laughed out of court as Utopian. Nevertheless, I maintain that it is the only way to keep Hinduism alive and India undivided. The history of the Congress non-violence for the last twenty-five years has taught us nothing, if it has not taught us that."

Question: "How can we counteract the activities of communists who are openly opposing the Congress?"

Gandhi: "The principle which I have laid down here *vis-a-vis* the Hindu-Muslim question also holds good in respect of communists. By 'Muslim' I mean the Muslim League. For, not all the Muslims are Muslim Leaguers. The Muslim Leaguers have today raised the slogan that the ten crores of Indian Muslims are in danger of being submerged and swept out of existence, unless they constitute themselves into a separate state. I call that slogan scaremongering, pure and simple. It is nonsense to say that any people can permanently crush or can swamp out of existence one-fourth of its population, which the Muslims are in India. But I would have no hesitation in conceding the demand of Pakistan, if I could be convinced of its righteousness or that it is good for Islam. But I am firmly convinced that the Pakistan demand, as put forth by the Muslim League, is un-Islamic and I have not hesitated to call it sinful. Islam stands for the unity and brotherhood of mankind, not for disrupting the oneness of the human family. Therefore, those who want to divide India into possibly warring groups are enemies alike of India and Islam. They may cut me to pieces, but they cannot make me subscribe to something which I consider to be wrong.

"The question of the communists stands on a slightly different footing. They seem to have made trouble-making their profession. I have friends among them. Some of them are like sons to me. But it seems they do not make any distinction between fair and foul, truth and falsehood. They deny the charge. But their reported acts seem to sustain it. Moreover, they seem to take their instructions

from Russia, whom they regard as their spiritual home, rather than India. I cannot countenance this dependence on an outside power. I have said that we should not depend even on the Russian wheat in our present food crisis. We must have the ability and courage to subsist on what our soil can give us, rather than depend on foreign charity. Otherwise, we shall not deserve to exist as an independent country. The same applies to foreign ideologies. I would accept them only to the extent that I can assimilate them and adapt them to the Indian scene. But I must refuse to go under them.

"My formula for the communists, therefore, is that I would prefer to die at their hands, but I will not retaliate."

"When will this orgy of madness end? Killings in Calcutta, and stabbings in Dacca, Agra, Ahmedabad and Bombay. To it must now be added the technique of poisoning. Must India go in for this crowning infamy? Or, is India's destiny to illustrate to the world the truth of the old Indian saying that greatest corruption leads to greatest pessimism and crime?" In these words, Gandhi poured out his soul's anguish over these dark happenings in the course of his prayer address on October 2. Nandita Kripalani, grand-daughter of Tagore, had just sung the poet's song:

"When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.

"When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.

"When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out, come to me, my lord of silence with thy peace and rest.

"When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door my king, and come with thy regalities.

"When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, Oh Thou Holy One, Thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder."

"It is almost as if God has sent a special message to me and to us in this hymn today," he said. "Springs of life in India appear to be dry today. We would be foolish to imagine that all is well because we have a Congress ministry at the Centre. It was as if God had come to us with His awful light and thunder to awaken us at a time when our minds are blinded with delusion and dust."

The next day, Gandhi said that he was receiving letters of abuse saying that his doctrine of non-violence was emasculating Hindus, that he was no mahatma, that he was injuring them and leading them astray. He said, he never laid claim to being a mahatma.

He was an ordinary mortal, as any one of them. He hoped he had never injured anyone. What he told them, he told them for their own and the universal good. He had said that if they could not act non-violently, they should defend themselves violently rather than be cowards. But the ability to die smiling at the hands of a brother without retaliation, physical or mental, was the highest bravery. In no case, was it right to spoil for a fight. That was no self-defence. It was bad for them, bad for the country, and utter disloyalty to their leaders. It was hindering them in their march towards swaraj. He reiterated that today no one had the right to feast and eat one morsel more than was necessary. If they behaved in a disciplined manner, India would live. If they did not, then she would die and they would be unable to hold their heads high.

It was a seer, who in an inspired moment, envisaged the sending out of armies not of occupation but of non-violence for service to other countries, to take to them the fruits of culture and the arts of peace. Like many other countries, Afghanistan was in the grip of economic shortages, particularly of cloth. An S.O.S. was received the other day through the Afghan Agent-General by Nehru inquiring whether India could not do a friendly turn to Afghanistan, by providing them with cloth. Nehru referred the Afghan request to him. He had received an intimation only a few days ago from the Punjab that they had for disposal a stock of two and a half lakh worth of khadi. He mentioned this fact to the Afghan Consul who saw him on October 6. Later the Afghan friends examined some samples of the printed and dyed khadi and said that they would be immensely pleased to have what could be spared. They welcomed Nehru's suggestion too that India might send a batch of organizers and technical experts to teach them to organize hand-spinning and the manufacture of khadi in Afghanistan itself.

Jawaharlal was the first minister in the land, remarked Gandhi in his prayer address. He could not turn a deaf ear to anyone's need. Today they had to confess with shame that they had gone mad and were fighting with each other. People from all over the world were wiring to congratulate India on having come thus far towards independence through non-violence. How could they be enemies of anyone? Their Badshah Khan was a Pathan. His brother Pathans across the border had come to ask for cloth. It was India's duty to help them. This river of love could and should flow from India.

Time was when India not only clothed herself but her muslins were famed throughout the world for their exquisite texture. Today they were naked in their own country, and all through their own laziness. Money could buy neither grain nor cloth in a country which should feed and clothe herself with ease.

He claimed that if they put their shoulders to the task and took to spinning, they could fulfil not only their own but the needs of the world in the matter of cloth.

"If I were a dictator," he told a missionary, "religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state would look after secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern." He then went on to describe his own conception of religion. "You must watch my life, how I live, eat, sit, talk, and behave in general. The sum-total of all those in me is my religion."

"It is religious movement that would dominate the future," he added. "It would do so today but it does not, for religion has been reduced to a Saturday or a Sunday affair; it has to be lived every moment of one's life. Such religion, when it comes, will dominate the world."

## *Unto This Last*

1946

ANNUAL meeting of the All-India Spinners' Association was held on October 8, 1946 in Delhi. It brought home the fact that with the advent of national government several things, that were so far regarded from a theoretical plane, had entered the realm of practical possibility. About eighty members participated in the proceedings. One of the questions discussed was about the exclusion of mill cloth from certain areas and laying of an embargo on the erection of new textile mills, in order that mill cloth should not compete with and kill khadi. Gandhi had suggested that in the areas where the people were prepared to try out the experiment of self-sufficiency in cloth, the Government should prohibit the entry of the mill cloth. He had also advised the provincial governments that if they were serious about making khadi universal, they should not erect textile mills, nor permit them to be erected. They could not spend crores on the new mills and yet expect villagers to take their khadi schemes seriously.

A worker suggested that the A.-I.S.A. might pass a resolution requesting the Government to nationalize all new textile mills and the existing ones also, as soon as practicable. In reply Gandhi said that they could not ask the Government to nationalize new textile mills when they were telling them that khadi and the erection of new mills could not go together. Shri T. Prakasam, the Chief Minister of Madras, had already made an announcement to the effect that no new textile mills would be erected in the Province of Madras. They might ask for the nationalization of the existing mills, but he himself preferred putting them under strict state control to taking charge of and running them as a state concern. As a believer in non-violence he believed in trusteeship. He wanted a peaceful conversion of mill-owners, so that millowners and their employees would come under the social control voluntarily. That meant that though, for instance, X might continue to be the legal owner, he would only take such

commission out of the profits for himself, as was warranted by his services and sanctioned by the people. The real owners would be the labourers in mills. In one of the Tata concerns, the labourers were reported to have become profit-sharers. He considered such a solution to be the best. Several millowners had assured him that they were ready to co-operate in any such scheme, if required, and would prevent further expansion of their textile mills. He deprecated the idea of joint control of the mill industry by the Government, the A.-I.S.A. and the millowners. "Our job is not to run mills," said he, "but to ply the little wheel by the hand. Why should we spend time in discussing a thing which lies outside our sphere of action. I would not shed a single tear, if all the mills were to close. If mills flourish, khadi must die. It might still function as a supplementary occupation for the relief of the poor. But for that, you do not need a big organization like the A.-I.S.A." He would be perfectly satisfied if the state exercised control over the mills in consultation with them and, so far as possible, according to their advice.

The question of giving a subsidy to khadi also came up for discussion. The weaving of hand-spun yarn was becoming more and more difficult. The handloom weavers preferred to weave mill yarn. The weaving charges were so high, as to render even self-sufficiency in khadi too expensive. "Would it not be advisable," argued Jajuji, "to ask the Government to give those who spin for themselves a subsidy, so as to reduce the charges of weaving for self-spinners?" Gandhi's reply was that they should not ask for a subsidy, but ask the Government to help in supplying cotton, necessary implements and services of teachers and technical experts to those who would take to spinning for their own cloth requirements. He did not want to have it said that the Charkha Sangh was cashing its influence to make the Government squander money on the whims of cranks and faddists. He wanted no favour for the Charkha Sangh which must stand or fall on its merits. He wanted everybody to feel that nothing had been given at the instance of the Charkha Sangh, which had not been paid back tenfold.

Another member suggested that the weavers should be required to weave a certain amount of hand-spun yarn, and unless they did that, the quota of mill yarn should not be given to them. Any kind of compulsion, said Gandhi, would only create a revulsion against khadi. It would then cease to be the livery of freedom. "The spirit

of independence is in the air. The weaver might well refuse to be compelled."

"There is control in everything—food, cloth, etc.," argued Jajuji. "Why can't joint control be introduced with regard to weavers?"

Gandhi replied: "I do not like the idea. We do not use compulsion with regard to spinners. We can't use it for weavers. Let us go to the root of the difficulty. Our initial mistake was that we took to spinning, but neglected weaving. If we had adopted the universal weaving along with spinning, all these difficulties would not have arisen. The remedy is to improve the yarn, so that the weavers have as little difficulty in weaving as possible. We should reason with the weavers and explain to them that dependence on mill yarn must kill their avocation in the end. Millowners are no philanthropists. They would draw the noose tight round the neck of the handloom weaver, the moment they come within the effective range of competition with mill cloth.

"If we have faith in the spinning wheel, we must forge ahead undismayed by these temporary bottle-necks. The number of handlooms weaving hand-spun yarn will increase in due course. We have got enough artisans and indigenous skill in our country to produce all the cloth that we require for ourselves."

Jajuji said: "This means that the work must go on as before at snail's pace. Our scheme of making four lakhs of people self-sufficient in cloth in a short time in this way will not succeed."

"If it does not, the fault will be ours," said Gandhi.

"That is right in the ultimate sense," said Jajuji. "But circumstances also count."

"It is man's privilege to overcome adverse circumstances," said Gandhi. "Is not conquest of nature the slogan of the age we are living in? If circumstances alone had counted, Germany and Japan would have won the war. Let us in this respect take a leaf out of the book of the English people, who do not know what it is to admit defeat. We have to cultivate austerity and penance in our life. There is nothing that the power of penance cannot achieve."

"You have taught us to be straight and above-board in everything," remarked another member. "Is it not dishonest to wear uncertified khadi and be known as a khadiwala, when one does not fulfil the conditions of wearing khadi? Is it not better to be honest and use mill cloth instead?"

Gandhi said that he did not approve of uncertified khadi, but he was of opinion that khadi, so long as it was genuine stuff, was preferable to mill cloth. All uncertified khadi was not dishonest. For instance, people who spun for themselves or their family and had their yarn woven did not use certified khadi. Yet such khadi was of the highest merit. Certified khadi carried the guarantee that the rules of the A.-I.S.A. had been observed, as for instance, paying to spinners a certain minimum wage. Khadi, even when the spinners were not paid the standard A.-I.S.A. wage, was preferable to mill cloth. The higher wages paid to labourers in the spinning mills were more apparent than real. The experts had told him that if the mill industry did not receive special privileges and concessions in several ways, which it today enjoyed, mill cloth would not sell cheaper than khadi. For instance, we provided cheap transport facilities to mills to enable the raw materials and mass produced finished goods to be taken from one place to another. Again, enormous sums had been spent on growing long-staple cotton or on starting technical institutes and on research work. No one had bothered to do anything for any of the seven lakhs of India's villages. So the mills were today actually being subsidized in some shape or other. "Remove all that and then see whether mill cloth is cheaper than khadi."

He could not possibly encourage uncertified khadi, but mill cloth should be absolutely taboo. He observed:

"A day might come when the A.-I.S.A. might stop issuing certificates. Anybody would then be free to sell khadi. That would be inevitable, when khadi becomes universal. The A.-I.S.A. will then function as the custodian of the ethics and general policy of khadi. Its business activities will cease. People must become honest by habit and insist upon meticulous honesty on the part of producers of and dealers in khadi, so that only genuine stuff is sold and bought.

"I have called khadi and charkha the symbols of non-violence. But it is said that there is dishonesty even in the certified bhandars. I wish it were not so. But there is no denying the fact that this is true of some.

"I objected to the term vegetable ghee, because it is not ghee. It should be labelled as vegetable oil. Similarly, I cannot tolerate that cloth which is not khadi, is not hand-spun and hand-woven, should pass as such. The ultimate remedy lies in the buyer's hands. 'Buyer beware' is a sound legal maxim for all to remember."

Another point discussed at the meeting was about the devolution of the authority of the Charkha Sangh to local khadi organizations. It was suggested that the formulation of khadi policy for each unit of area should be left entirely to local bodies, which should be completely independent of the central organization. While Gandhi was entirely in favour of the maximum decentralization of khadi work, he was for a body of technicians and experts, men endowed with business talent and filled with the spirit of service. There was no room in it for personal ambition or power politics. Others had suggested that it should convert itself into an organization of workers. To introduce an element of democracy into khadi work would be to kill khadi. The Charkha Sangh was not a democratic organization in the sense the Congress was. It was an organization created by the Congress for the building up of democracy. Like the directorate of the Bank of England, it was a business organization first and last. Only it was motivated by an altruistic, not profit motive. A business organization of a democratic body could not be bound by the procedure of the democratic vote.

"We want to disperse in villages," he added. "A khadi worker can have no use for any other sanction, save such as persuasion and service can command. The moment he seeks to arm himself with any other, he kills khadi."

The A.-I.S.A. session over, he turned his attention to communal harmony. Under "Hindu Pani and Muslim Pani", he wrote:

"A stranger travelling in Indian trains may well have a painful shock, when he hears at railway stations for the first time in his life ridiculous sounds about *pani*, tea and the like, being either Hindu or Muslim. It would be repulsive now that the Government at the Centre is wholly national and a well-known Indian in the person of Asaf Ali Saheb is in charge of transport and railways. It is to be hoped that we shall soon have the last of the shame that is peculiarly Indian. Let no one imagine that railways being under a Muslim, Hindus may not get justice. In the Central and provincial government, there is or should be no Hindu, Muslim or any other communal distinctions. All are Indians. Religion is a personal matter. Moreover, members of the cabinet have set up a wholesome convention that they should always meet at the end of the day's work and take stock of what each member has done. It is a team-work in which the members are jointly and severally responsible for one

another's work. It is not open to a member to say that a particular thing is not his work, because it is no part of his portfolio. We have a right, therefore, to assume that this unholy practice of having separate everything for every community at railway stations will go. Scrupulous cleanliness is a desideratum for all. If taps are used for all liquids, there need be no compunction felt by the most orthodox about helping themselves. A fastidious person may keep his own *lota* and cup and receive his milk, tea, coffee or water through a tap. In this, there is no interference with religion. No one is compelled to buy anything at railway stations. As a matter of fact, many orthodox persons fast for water and food during travel. Thanks, we still breathe the same air, walk on the same mother earth.

"All the communal cries, at least, at the railway stations, should be unlawful.

"As I have often said in these columns, trains and steamers are the best media for the practical education of millions of travellers in spotless cleanliness, hygiene, sanitation and camaraderie between the different communities of India. Let us hope the cabinet will have the courage to act up to their convictions and they may confidently expect the hearty co-operation of the railway staff and the public in making this much needed reform a thorough success."

One correspondent asked: "Can you say why, when the mutual slaughter between brother and brother is going on, the names of the respective communities should be withheld?"

Gandhi replied: "I confess that the question has often occurred to me. There seems to me to be no reason for this hush-hush policy, save that it is a legacy from the autocracy which, let us hope, the national governments have now displaced. Those who ought not to know, know who stabs whom. And those who should know are kept in the dark. I am sure there are many Hindus and Muslims and even members of other communities taking pride in being Indians first and last, without ceasing to be devoted followers of their own religion and who love to do their best to dissuade the blind fanatics from making mischief. I know many such. They have no means of ascertaining facts except through the press. Let darkness be exposed to light. It will be dispelled quicker."

In an editorial entitled "Real India", Gandhi wrote:

"If my frequent wanderings throughout India of the villages have not deceived me, it can be confidently asserted that the 700,000

villages get and want no police protection. The solitary patel to a village is a terrorist lording it over the villages and is designed for helping the petty revenue collector to collect revenue due to the *ma-bap*. I am not aware of the policeman having aided the villagers in protecting their goods or cattle against the depredations of man and beast. The police patel is not to be blamed for what he is. He has been chosen for his task which he does well. He has not been taught to regard himself as the servant of the people. The patel represents his master the Viceroy. The change at the top has not yet permeated the most distant village. How can it? It has not come from the bottom. The Viceroy still retains the legal and military powers to remove and even to imprison his ministers. The ministers have no power, legal or other, to imprison the Viceroy. Even the civil service is still under the Viceroy's control. It is not suggested that the Viceroy does not mean to shed all power, nor that he does not wish the most distant village to realize that he is determined under instructions from Whitehall to shed every vestige of British control in the quickest time possible.

"The relevance of all this writing is for showing, that we do not yet learn from the village in which India lives, that every Indian, man or woman, is his or her own policeman. This he or she can do only when neither harbours mischief against his or her neighbour, no matter what religion he professes or denies. If unfortunately the politically minded person will not or cannot go as far as suggested here, he must at least shed all fear and resolutely deny himself all protection, whether from the military or the police. I am positive that India will not come into her own, unless every home becomes its own castle, not in the sense of the ages known as dark but in the very ancient true sense that everyone has learnt the art of dying without ill will, or even wishing that since he cannot someone else will do away with the would-be assassin. How nice, therefore, it would be, if every one of us had this lesson burnt into us. There is much proof in support of the lesson, if we will take the trouble to examine the proof."

On October 7, Gandhi referred to the negotiations in progress between Nehru and Jinnah and expressed the hope that the Muslim League would join the Interim Government. He wanted all to pray that this time the union between the Congress and Muslim League would be even deeper and more lasting than during the Khilafat

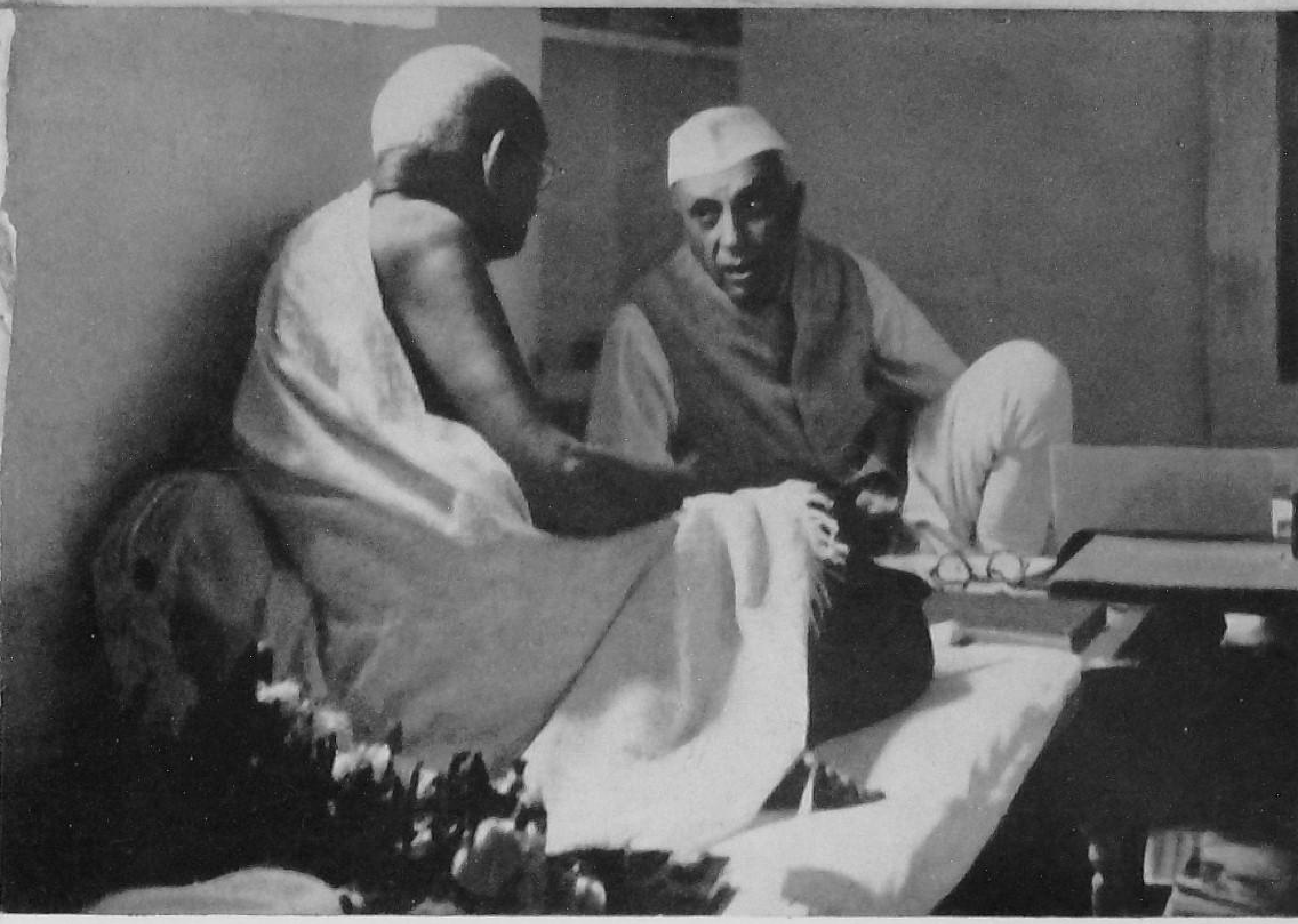
days and that brother would no longer abuse or kill brother, and would live at peace.

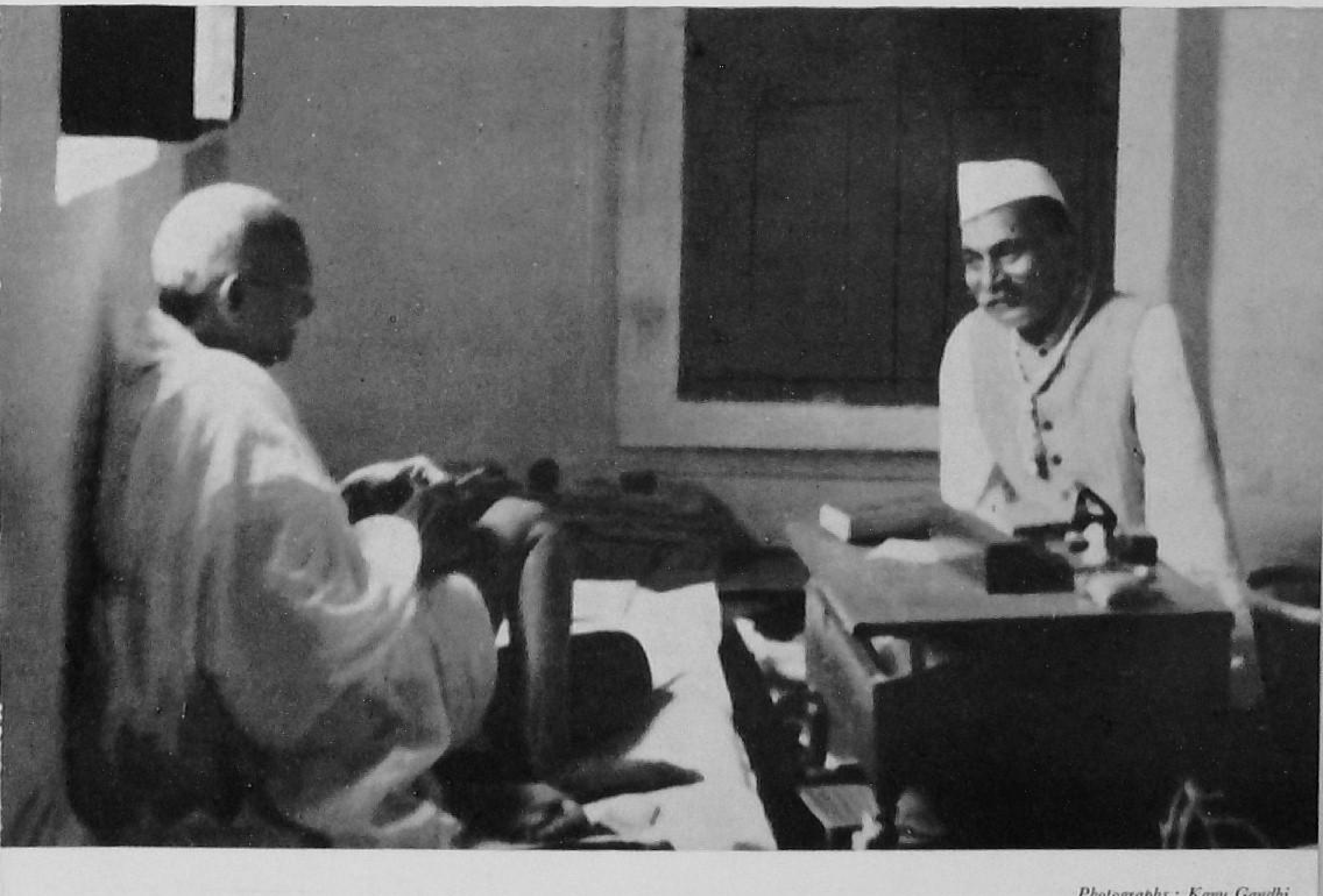
In the next prayer meeting, Gandhi said that he could not give them any news now, nor could anyone tell what the future held in store. It might be that God wanted them to suffer more. If that was their lot, they must endure it.

But they should remember that actions of man were significant of the condition of his mind. The audience before him were a mere drop in the ocean of Indian humanity, but if everyone wanted to live at peace with his brother, the Congress and Muslim League had to come together. It was true that the Viceroy had to take orders from the British Cabinet in England, but, all the same, he was an autocrat. Their leaders, however, were the people's men, who had to do the people's will. Therefore, he exhorted them all to pray to God to purge their minds of all anger and hatred, and give wisdom to their leaders, so that India may have unity and freedom. Once they ceased to quarrel and kill each other, they would be free and in an independent India there was much to be done. Today, they were foodless and naked; bribery and corruption and blackmarketing were rife. All these must go and then they could get together and build the new order that they wanted in India.

Addressing the prayer meeting on October 12, he disclosed how he felt impelled to tell them of a mistake committed by him three days back. In the course of his delicate mission in connection with Congress-League parleys, he found himself nodding. His nod consisted in being over-hasty, in reading a paragraph hurriedly. He fancied it was all right, when it was not. Luckily the mistake was detected in time, and no harm came out of it. But it shook him to his depths. It was the first experience of its kind in his long life. Was it a sign of creeping senility in his seventy-seventh year? Then he had no business to be in public life.

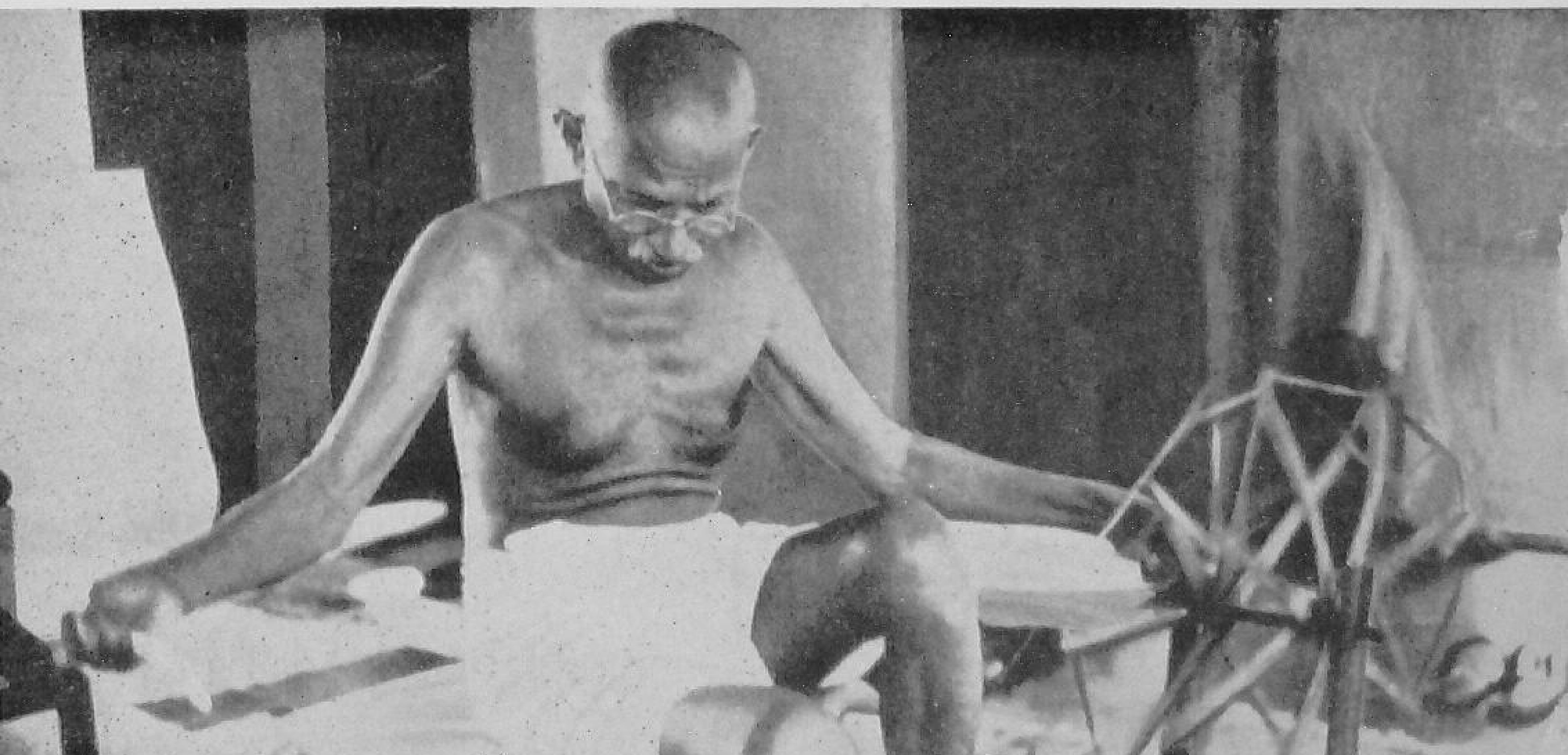
"I have ever followed the maxim," he stated, "that one should not let the sun go down upon one's error without confessing it. No mortal is proof against error. The danger consists in concealing one's error, in adding untruth to it, in order to gloss it over. When a boil becomes septic, you press out the poison and it subsides. But should the poison spread inwards, it would spell certain death. Even so, it is with error and sin. To confess an error or sin, as soon as it is discovered, is to purge it out."





*Photographs : Kanu Gandhi*

With Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad on his seventy-seventh birthday, October 2, 1946, Bhangi Colony, Delhi



*Photographs : B. K. Sinha*

At Sodepur, October 1946

Courtesy : Hindusthan Standard

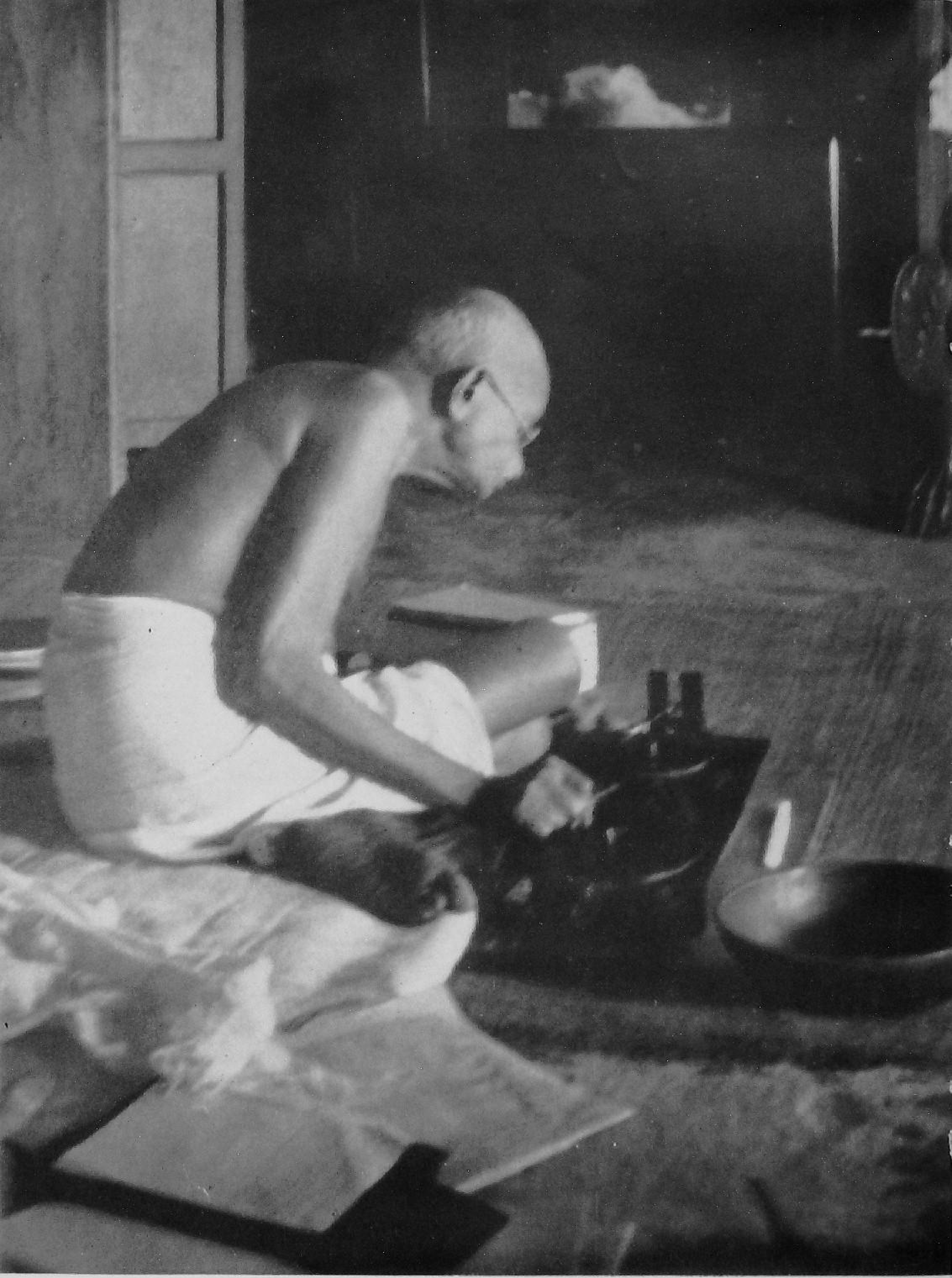
On the way to Noakhali, November 1946

*Courtesy : Hindusthan Standard*

Gandhi addressing the people on a railway platform at Kushtia, November 6, 1946

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

On the way to Chandpur, November 1946

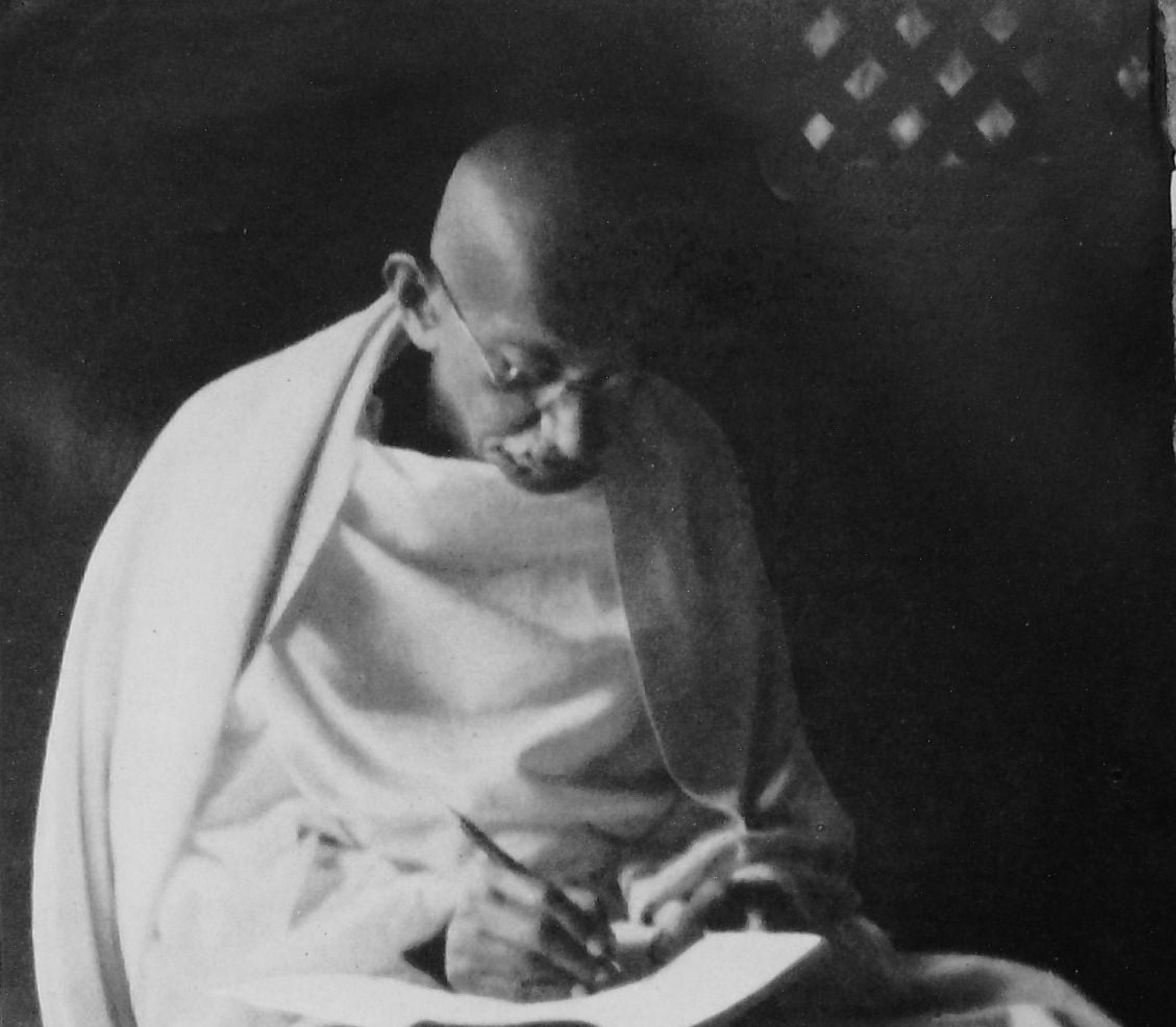


Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

At Chaumuhani, November 8, 1946

Photographs : B. K. Sinha

His visit to the devastated area of Dattapara, November 12, 1946



*Photograph : Kanu Gandhi*

At Kazirkhil, November 14, 1946

"What penance shall I do for it?" asked Gandhi of himself and replied: "To resolve never to let it happen again. This is the only way to really expiate for an error."

He concluded by expressing the hope that they would all learn a lesson from his own example and never be hasty or careless in their actions. Whilst the confession had relieved his mind of a burden, it had shaken his confidence in his ability to live up to 125 years and it might be a long time before his self-confidence would return.

As an aid to introspection and in order to conserve his energy, he took to indefinite silence for all normal purposes, and broke it only to address the evening prayer gatherings, or whenever it was necessary for his present mission in Delhi.

A visitor was discussing with Gandhi the gruesome happenings in Calcutta and elsewhere. As he sat listening to the stories that came from Bengal, his mind was made up.

"If I leave Delhi," he said, "it will not be in order to return to Sevagram, but only to go to Bengal. Else, I would stay here and stew in my own juice."

He consulted two workers from Bengal that evening. "Allow us to go there first and report," they said. "Give us a chance to do our bit, and then, if necessary, you can come."

One of them asked Gandhi, whether he would recommend fasting to check the orgy of communal madness that was spreading in Bengal. Gandhi's reply was in the negative. He narrated how his valuable colleague from Ahmedabad had invited him to immolate himself. "We believe in the non-violent way but lack the strength. Your example would steady our wavering faith and fortify us." The logic was perfect and the temptation great. But Gandhi resisted it and said 'No'. "There is no inner call. When it comes, nothing will keep me back. I have reasoned with myself too about it. But I need not set forth my reasons. Let the people call me a coward, if they please. I have faith that, when the hour arrives, God will give me the strength to face it and I won't be found unready."

"Fasting cannot be undertaken mechanically," he proceeded. "It is a powerful thing but a dangerous thing, if handled amateurishly. It requires complete self-purification, much more than what is required in facing death with retaliation even in mind. One such act of perfect sacrifice would suffice for the whole world. Such is held to be Jesus' example."

"The idea is," he explained, "that you appropriate to yourself and assimilate the essence of his sacrifice, symbolically represented by the bread and wine of the Eucharist. A man who was completely innocent offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, even including his enemies and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act. 'It is finished' were the last words of Jesus, and we have the testimony of his four disciples as to its authenticity. But, whether the Jesus tradition is historically true or not, I do not care. To me it is truer than history, because I hold it to be possible and it enshrines an eternal law—the law of vicarious and innocent suffering taken in its true sense."

Gandhi then proceeded to show how the lesson of Jesus could be applied to the present situation. "A Hindu and a Muslim braved the fury of the maddened crowd in Bombay and went down together literally clapsed in a fatal embrace but refused to desert each other. Rajab Ali and Vasantrao Hegishte similarly fell to mob frenzy in the attempt to quell it. 'What came out of it?' people might ask. 'The fire still continues to rage.' I do not think for a moment it has gone in vain. We may not see the effect today. Our non-violence is as yet a mixed affair. It limps. Nevertheless, it is there and continues to work like a leaven in a silent and invisible way, least understood by most. It is the only way."

"Go forth, therefore," he said. "I have done. I will not detain you for a day longer. You have my blessings. And I tell you there will be no tears but only joy, if tomorrow I get the news that all of you are killed."

At the prayer gathering, he said that he had received numerous messages from Bengal inviting him to go there and still the raging fury. Whilst he did not believe that he had any such capacity, he was anxious to go to Bengal. Only he thought it was his duty to wait till Nehru's return from the N.-W. Frontier Province and the meeting of the Working Committee. But he was in God's hands. If he clearly felt that he should wait for nothing, then he would not hesitate to anticipate the date. His heart was in Bengal.

Addressing the prayer gathering on October 15, he referred to the week's events. There was first the flood havoc in Assam. Many thousands had been rendered homeless, property worth lakhs had been destroyed and several lives lost. That was an act of God. But far worse than the news from Assam was the fact that an orgy of

madness had seized a section of humanity in Bengal. Man had sunk lower than the brute. Reports were coming through that Hindus, who were in a very small minority there, were being attacked by Muslims. Ever since he had heard of the happenings in Noakhali, he had been furiously thinking as to what his own duty was. God would show him the way. He knew his stock had gone down with the people, so far as the teaching of non-violence was concerned. The people still showered affection upon him. He appreciated their affection and felt very thankful for it. But the only way in which he could express his thanks and appreciation was to place before them and through them the world the truth which God had vouchsafed to him, and to the pursuit of which his whole life was devoted, even at the risk of forfeiting their affection and regard. At the moment, he felt prompted to tell them that it would be wrong on the part of Hindus to think in terms of reprisals for what had happened in Noakhali and elsewhere in East Bengal. Non-violence was the creed of the Congress. It had brought them to their present strength. But it would be counted only as a coward's expedient, if its use was to be limited only against the British power which was strong, and while violence was to be freely used against our own brethren. He refused to believe that they could ever adopt that as their creed. Although the Congress had an overwhelming majority of Hindus on its membership rolls, he maintained that it was by no means a Hindu organization and that it belonged equally to all communities. He had told Acharya Kripalani, who had succeeded Pandit Nehru in the presidentship of the Congress, that it was going to prove no feather-bed for him. If the Chief Minister of the Cabinet had to wear a crown of thorns, the Congress President would have to lie on a bed of thorns. The late Sir Syed Ahmed had called Hindus and Muslims the two eyes of India. The Congress President could not possibly discriminate between the two; he was pledged to equally serve both. He had, therefore, asked Kripalani to proceed on mission of peace to East Bengal to teach people the art of dying without killing. It should be his privilege to demonstrate it by his personal example. He was going there with his wife not to protect one party but to stop the fratricide which threatened to overwhelm India. It was a good beginning for him and his wife.

He appealed to the Muslim League too to turn the searchlight inward. They had decided to come into the Interim Government. He

hoped that they were coming in to work as brothers. If they did, all would be well. And just as he had exhorted Hindus not to slay Muslims, nor harbour ill will towards them, so he appealed to the League, even if they wanted to fight for Pakistan, to fight cleanly and as brothers. The Qaid-e-Azam had said that minorities would be fully protected and everyone would receive justice in Pakistan. It was as good as Pakistan, where they were in the majority and he implored them to treat the Hindus as blood brothers and not as enemies. It boded ill for Pakistan, if what was happening in East Bengal was an earnest of things to come. He hoped both Hindus and Muslims respectively would stand mutually as surety and pledge themselves to see that not a hair of the head of the minority community in their midst was injured. Unless they learnt to do that, he would say that their assumption of the reins of power was a mere blind. What was going on in Bengal was not worthy of human beings. They had to learn to be human beings first.

Gandhi's hope that the coming of the Muslim League into the Interim Government would prove to be a good augury was, however, destined to receive a rude shock by inclusion of a Scheduled Caste name in the list of the Muslim League's nominees. It might be supposed, he remarked on October 16, that a man like himself ought to be glad that another seat had been given to a Harijan. But he would be deceiving himself and the Qaid-e-Azam, if he said so. Jinnah had said that the Muslims and Hindus were two nations. The League was a purely communal organization. How then could they nominate a Harijan to represent them? He feared their whole mode of entry into the cabinet had not been straight. He could not sense any generosity in the nomination of a Harijan in their quota of five seats, especially when he knew what was happening in East Bengal. He was, therefore, forced to wonder whether they had come into the cabinet also to fight. He hoped, nevertheless, that his fears would prove to be wrong and that they would work as brothers, out to serve India as a whole. He hoped too that the Harijan member would prove a worthy son and servant of India.

"It is not death that matters, but how you meet death," he remarked on another occasion. To die at the hands of one's brother is a privilege, provided you die bravely. But what about women who were being abducted and forcibly converted? That no one could be "converted" forcibly was here beside the point. "And why should

Indian women feel so helpless? Is bravery a monopoly of men only? Women, of course, do not generally carry swords, though the Rani of Jhansi did and outdid all her contemporaries in the valour of the sword. Still all women cannot become Ranis of Jhansi. But all can emulate the example of Sita, whom even the mighty Ravana dared not touch. Ranis of Jhansi could be subdued."

"Let no one dismiss the example of Sita as legendary," he proceeded and gave the example of Olive Doke who dared to go and live among the unclad primitive Negro tribes in the heart of Africa without fear of molestation. It was that higher type of valour which he wanted Indian womanhood to cultivate. The military and police might protect them from abduction, but what about those who had already been abducted, or those who might be abducted in spite of the police and military. They ought to learn to die before a hair of their head could be injured. He averred that it was possible for a woman to put an end to herself by choking or biting the tongue.

The next evening, October 18th, he had to revise the technique. Dr. Sushila Nayyar who had heard him the day before had told him, and Dr. B. C. Roy who saw him the next morning confirmed her statement, that one could not end his life by choking or biting one's tongue. The only way known to medicine for the instant self-immolation was a strong poisonous dose. If this was so, he would advise every one running the risk of dishonour to take poison, before submission to dishonour. He had, however, heard from those given to yogic practices that it was possible by some yogic practice to end life. He would try to inquire. His was not an idle idea. He meant all he had said. The very fact of steeling oneself for death before dishonour braced one for the struggle. Woman in our country was brought up to think that she was well only with her husband, or on the funeral pyre. He would far rather see India's women trained to wield arms, than that they should feel helpless. The vogue of carrying daggers and revolvers by women was on the increase. He knew, however, that the arms were a poor weapon, when it came to the matter of defending one's honour against odds. Arms were a symbol of one's helplessness, not strength. When one was deprived of them, generally there was nothing left but surrender.

A question was: "What about those who have been abducted or forcibly converted or married under duress against their will?" In reply, Gandhi stated that he had no hesitation in maintaining that

forcible conversion was no conversion at all, nor abduction a bar to the return to her home of the abducted girl. He held that no purification or penance was necessary in such cases. The Hindu society was wrong when it imposed penance on such persons. They had not erred. He had lived for years among Muslims and Christians. They had all assured him that there could be no compulsion in religion. Those who resorted to it did not deserve to be called men of religion. In one sense, he and his audience who believed that God was one and that there was no other, and who believed that Mahomed was one of His messengers were Muslims. But if any one forced them to recite the Kalma, they would refuse to obey and take the consequences. It was his fervent hope that good Muslims would stand up against the practices reported from the affected area in Bengal.

In his written message on Monday, October 21st, Gandhi said that the coming Diwali could not be an occasion for feasting. How could there be feasting or illuminations, he asked, when the atmosphere was rent with wailing, lamentation and woe of helpless and martyred innocence. Starvation and nakedness stalked the land, he grimly remarked. On the top of that, they were quarrelling amongst themselves. He had written and said enough on the subject. Yet he could not help repeating that, in these days, those who were pure should become purer, those who were sinners should wash off their sins. All should save as much food as possible, and spin as much as they could, so that there might be more cloth. To save food was as good as producing it. To spin was to help reduce the nakedness of India. He who was truthful took the world a step forward. "Let these things engage all our energies," he concluded. "It should be clear to us that these are not days of festivity or merry-making."

He followed it up with New Year's message: "India is passing through difficult time. As a matter of fact, the whole world is passing through a crisis and India is no exception."

"What help do we need to meet this crisis?" he asked. According to the teaching of the Gita, the first requisite for spiritual conduct was fearlessness. On New Year day people made some good resolve. He wanted them to make a firm resolve to shed all fear. Without fearlessness, all other virtues were turned into dust. Attainment of truth or non-violence was impossible without fearlessness.

On October 21, Gandhi gave an interview to Mr. Preston Grover of the Associated Press of America. Gandhi stated that the Muslim

League ministry in Bengal should be able to control the outbreak of disorders in East Bengal in which a good few thousands had been driven from their homes and an undermined number killed or kidnapped. He described the Bengal outbreak as "heart-breaking".

He announced his intention of visiting Bengal after his meeting on October 23 with Nehru and the Working Committee, when they were to discuss problems created by the entry of the Muslim League group into the central ministry.

"The fact that I go there will satisfy the soul and may be of some use," he said.

"Will the Muslims listen to you?" Mr. Grover asked.

"I don't know," he said. "I do not go with any expectation, but I have the right to expect it. A man who goes to do his duty only expects to be given strength by God to do his duty."

To a question as to when this type of disturbances would end in India, he replied: "You may be certain that they will end. If the British influence were withdrawn, they would end much quicker. While the British influence is here, both the parties, I am sorry to confess, look to the British power for assistance."

Turning to the affairs of the Interim Government, he regretted the statement made by Ghazanfar Ali Khan that the Muslim League was going into Interim Government in order to fight for Pakistan. Gandhi observed:

"That is an extraordinary and inconsistent attitude. The Interim Government is for the interim period only and may not last long. While it is in office, it is there to deal with the problems that face the country—starvation, nakedness, disease, bad communications, corruption, illiteracy. Any one of the problems would be enough to tax the best minds of India. On these there is no question of Hindu or Muslim. Both are naked. Both are starving. Both wish to drive out the demon of illiteracy and un-Indian education.

"There is not much time to elapse between Interim Government and that to be set up by the constituent assembly. The time will be shortened, if both apply their will to the completion of the work on the constituent assembly.

"The constituent assembly is based on the state paper. The paper has put in cold storage the idea of Pakistan. It has recommended the device of 'grouping', which the Congress interprets in one way, the Muslim League in another and the Cabinet Mission in a third

way. No lawgiver can give any authoritative interpretation of his own law. If then there is a dispute as to its interpretation, a duly constituted court of law must decide it."

"But if the League don't accept the court interpretation?"

"They cannot impose theirs on others," he replied. "If they do, they put themselves in the wrong box. The alternative is to come to blows. We are all savages and come to blows often when we do not agree. Yet we are all gentlemen. This is so whether in America or Europe."

To a question as to what would become of Englishmen in the service of the Government of India, Gandhi said:

"I think that India has use for every one of them who is loyal to India and to the Indian traditions and conditions and who will be above temptation and corruption. I do not want to say that they should be disloyal to England. That is not the point. They should not be disloyal to India. These things should not conflict, but it has happened in history. Most have come here to serve the country of their birth by exploiting India. That is hypocrisy. It is dishonest. There is no room for dishonesty in any service or outside it."

Asked if he had any message for America, he said: "Dislodge the money God called Mammon from the throne and find a corner for poor God. I think that America has a very big future but, in spite of what is said to the contrary, it has a dismal future if it swears by Mammon. Mammon has never been known to be a friend of any of us to the last. He is always a false friend."

Mr. Andrew Freeman of *New York Post* who came to see Gandhi asked: "Has the spinning wheel a message for America too ? Can it serve as a counter weapon to the atom bomb?"

"I do feel that it has a message for the U.S.A. and the whole world," he replied: "But it cannot be until India has demonstrated to the world that it has made the spinning wheel its own, which it has not done today. The fault is not of the spinning wheel, I have not the slightest doubt that the saving of India and of the world lies in the wheel. If India becomes the slave of the machine, then, I say, heaven save the world.

"India has a far nobler mission, namely, to establish friendship and peace in the world. Peace cannot be established through mere conferences. Peace is being broken, as we all see, even while conferences are being held."

"It seems so tragic," remarked Mr. Freeman. "India must lead the way and India is in turmoil. If any country can really take up the wheel, it is India. Do you think it will?"

"It is doing so," affirmed Gandhi, "but I confess the process is very slow. Pandit Nehru called khadi the 'livery of our freedom'. It cannot be that, so long as it is the consolation of cranks and of paupers only. There are many things that are not possible for man to accomplish. But everything is possible for God. If there is no living power called God, the spinning wheel has no place."

"Those who spin are not called cranks here?" asked Mr. Freeman with some concern.

"No, I used that expression to anticipate what Americans would say. I allow myself to be called by that name to protect myself. I was described by a friend as a 'practical idealist.'"

"As a fairly intelligent human being and an American, I can say," said Mr. Freeman, "that though many Americans would call spinners cranks, there are not a few who are thinking hard. Something has to be found, that would save civilization from destruction. Life must be simplified."

"Human personality cannot be sustained in any other way," said Gandhi. "I stand by what is implied in the phrase 'Unto this Last'. That book marked the turning-point in my life. We must do even unto this last, as we would have the world do by us. All must have equal opportunity. Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth. That is what the spinning wheel symbolizes."

"Would you like the American to take to the spinning wheel?" Mr. Freeman again asked.

"Yes," said Gandhi. "But I do not know whether it will be taken up by anybody, before it is well established here. If, on the other hand, India adopts it for clothing itself, I will not need to tell the world. It will adopt it of itself. Today there is such an onslaught on India of western machinery, that for India to withstand it successfully would be nothing short of a miracle. I must confess that today everything seems to point to the contrary. Look at the internecine quarrels in India."

"But you have not given up hope?" asked Mr. Freeman.

"I can't so long as I have faith in that living Power, who is more with us than we know. But let me ask you a counter question. Has

America with all its Mammon worship abolished unemployment, poverty, corruption, Tammany Hall?" asked Gandhi.

"The answer is obvious," said Mr. Freeman.

Gandhi asked: "Has England? Has she not still to grapple with the problems that baffle her? It is a curious commentary on the West that although it professes Christianity, there is no Christianity, or Christ in the West, or there should have been no war. That is how I understand the message of Jesus. There is much ignorance and superstition in India. But deep down in us is that faith in God, the instinct for religion."

"All newspapermen and others have sensed that," Mr. Freeman remarked. "But I must confess there are moments, when I feel it is hopeless. Look at the recent attack on Pandit Nehru in the tribal area from which I have just returned, and the happenings in East Bengal. You too must at times have felt the hopelessness of it all. Would you say Islam has repudiated its teacher as Christianity of today has its Jesus?"

"I have said so openly," replied Gandhi. "Where is Mahomed and his message which is peace? I said recently at a public gathering that if Mahomed came to India today, he would disown many of his so-called followers and own me as a true Muslim, as Jesus would own me as a true Christian."

"How can we bring man back to God or the teaching of Jesus, or that of Mahomed?" asked Mr. Freeman next.

"I might give the answer," he said, "that Jesus gave to one of his followers, 'Do the will of my Father who is in Heaven, not merely say Lord, Lord.' That holds true of you, me and everybody. If we have faith in the living God, all will be well with us. I hope not to lose faith even to my dying day. In spite of my numerous failings and shortcomings, of which I am but too well aware, my faith in God is burning brighter every day. If it did not, I would take the same prescription that I gave to the women threatened with dishonour and with no prospect of help or escape, namely, commit suicide."

"We are today suffering from a double evil: the suppression of the facts and concoction," stated Gandhi to a director of an influential British paper. Replying to a question as to when the present trouble would end, Gandhi remarked that it was bound to go, though he did not see any signs of abatement just yet. "There are interested parties fomenting it."

"Mine may be a voice in the wilderness today," he said, "but I maintain that so long as British troops are here, both Hindus and Muslims will continue to look up to them for help and the trouble will continue. Nothing worse could happen to a people struggling to be free."

"The Britishers would like their troops to go out quicker. Who obstructs?"

"Who else but the British themselves, unless you can show that it is physically impossible to effect an immediate withdrawal," replied Gandhi.

After some parrying, the journalist admitted that the British commercial and other vested interests in India stood in the way of their withdrawal. He was, however, still doubtful as to the function of the British troops in the maintenance of law and order. "You say that there can be no peace while they are here. Yet every day, there is an increasing demand for them for the maintenance of peace. The complaint is that they are not sufficiently used."

"That is the very reason why they should be withdrawn. Their presence, in my opinion, does not act as a preventive measure, but becomes punitive. Where they are used to maintain law and order, it is after the trouble. The future historians will bear this out. Order will be restored in East Bengal too. But after what slaughter, what suffering?" said Gandhi.

"No," he exclaimed, "the British troops are in India not to protect India but to protect the British interests which were imposed on India and which are now so well entrenched that even the British Government cannot dislodge them. The British did not come here as philanthropists, nor is there any altruism in their continued stay here or the continuation of their troops, all that might be claimed to the contrary, notwithstanding."

The conversation then turned on the question of war. "How do you think the succession of wars, such as we have witnessed of late, can be stopped?"

"I have no doubt," said Gandhi, "that unless big nations shed their desire of exploitation and the spirit of violence of which war is the natural expression and atom bomb the inevitable consequence, there is no hope for peace in the world. I tried to speak out during the war and wrote open letters to the British people, to Hitler and to the Japanese and was dubbed a fifth-columnist for my pains."

"But non-violence might take a very long time to act. But for the second front, there probably would have been no Russia," remarked the journalist.

"All these are arguments dictated by reason," observed Gandhi. "It is not permitted me to think in these terms, or else I would be denying my faith which today burns brighter than ever, in spite of all the bitter experiences that I have had. History provides us with a whole series of miracles of masses of people being converted to a particular viewpoint in the twinkling of an eye. Take the Boer War. It has given to the English language the word 'Maffeking'. People went mad on Maffeking Day. Yet, inside of two years, the whole British nation underwent a transformation. Henry Campbell Bannerman became the Premier and practically all the gains of war were given up." The recent Labour victory at the polls was another instance in point. "To me," Gandhi said, "it is a sufficient miracle that in spite of his oratory and brilliance, Churchill should cease to be the idol of the British people who till yesterday hung on his lips and listened to him in awe. All these instances are enough to sustain the faith of a believer like me that when all other powers are gone one will remain, call it God, Nature, or whatever you like."

His own faith in the triumph of non-violence Gandhi likened to that of the witnesses in the Second Coming of Christ. It was to take place within the lifetime of the witnesses, though it had taken two thousand years and yet remained a distant dream. Faith could think in no other terms.

## *Appeal To Bihar*

1946

The Congress Working Committee held at Delhi on October 23, 1946 adopted the following resolution on the recent happenings in East Bengal:

"The committee find it hard to express adequately their feeling of horror and pain at the present happenings in East Bengal. Reports published in the press and the statements of public workers depict a scene of bestiality and of medieval barbarity that must fill every decent human being with shame, disgust and anger. Deeds of violation and abduction of women, forcible religious conversion and of loot, arson and murder have been committed on a large scale in a predetermined and organized manner by persons often found to be in possession of rifles and other fire-arms.

"The committee are aware that it has been emphasized in certain quarters that facts have been exaggerated, but the communiques of the Bengal Government and statements of the chief minister themselves paint such a picture of ghastliness and extensive tragedy that no exaggeration is necessary to add to the effect.

"The committee hold that this outburst of brutality is the direct result of the politics of hate and civil strife that the Muslim League has practised for years past, and of the threats of violence that it has daily held out in the past months. The chief burden for permitting a civil calamity of such proportions to befall the people of the province must rest on the provincial government.

"Further, the Governor and the Governor-General, who claim to possess special responsibilities in such matters, must also share the burden for the events in Bengal. And their responsibility becomes the greater, when it is recalled that the Calcutta tragedy had clearly given the warning, and the minorities living in Eastern Bengal had made representations to the Government and the Governor and demanded protection and preventive measures.

"The Working Committee cannot help expressing their surprise and resentment that, in those circumstances, not only no preventive measures were taken, but, even after the outbreak of the crimes, no adequate steps were taken in time to stop them and to apprehend the criminals. Instead, an untenable attempt was made to cover up willing connivance or incompetence, or both, under the pretext of exaggeration of facts.

"The committee, fully conscious, as they are, of the inadequacy of an expression of feeling on such an occasion, do express their heart-felt sympathy with the sufferers in East Bengal. They wish further to appeal to all decent persons of all communities in Bengal and elsewhere not only to condemn these crimes, but also to take all adequate steps to defend the innocent from lawlessness and barbarity, no matter by whomsoever committed.

"At the same time, the committee must sound a warning against retaliatory outbreaks of communal violence. Nationalism and communalism are in a final death grip. The riots in East Bengal clearly form parts of a pattern of the political sabotage calculated to destroy Indian nationalism and check the advance of the country towards democratic freedom. Therefore, the committee cannot lay too much emphasis on the warning that communalism can only be fought with nationalism and not with counter communalism, which can only end in perpetuating foreign rule.

"Acharaya Kripalani, the president elect, is now in Noakhali and will visit the other affected areas in East Bengal. The committee are awaiting his report and will advise further action on taking into consideration all the information made available to it."

Just before the evening prayer on October 24, a crowd of excited young men, carrying placards and shouting angry slogans, came to demand redress for East Bengal and invaded the prayer ground in the sweepers' colony. They wished their voice to reach the Working Committee meeting which was held in Gandhi's room. Gandhi told them that it had already reached them. His own place, he knew, was in Bengal. He assured them that the heart of every man and woman, who believed in God, was bleeding for Bengal. He admonished them for creating a disturbance and asked them to be calm and join in the prayers.

One member of the audience shouted that they could not pray when their house was burning. The usual prayer was not recited.

Gandhi said their minds were not calm enough for it. Ramdhun was sung. Although the regular prayer had to be given up, it was in his heart, he said, and he was sure it would reach God.

Referring to the statement of the young man who had used the metaphor of a house on fire, he said that the duty of the owner of the house or his servant was that, when the house was burning, he should concentrate on putting out the fire and not lose his head. Gandhi alluded to the legend about King Janaka who remained calm and unperturbed, when the report was brought to him that his capital was burning, because he had done all he possibly could before and after the accident and, therefore, could rest secure in his faith in God. If he had lost his head and had run to the place of accident, he would only have assisted the flames by distracting attention. People were pained at the news of women's suffering in East Bengal. But they had so lost their heads, that they had themselves failed to be considerate towards the women in the audience. They had scared them away from the prayer ground. They had occupied the place where women sat every day. It was a strange way of demonstrating their sympathy with the outraged womanhood of East Bengal. He hoped that they would see the irony and inconsistency of it.

Our women were easily scared away. It was so, more or less, all the world over. He wanted the women to learn to be brave. His advice to them to commit suicide, rather than allow themselves to be dishonoured, had been much misunderstood. They could keep a dagger for self-defence, if they wished. But a dagger was of no use against overwhelming odds. He had advised them to take poison and end their lives, rather than submit to dishonour. Their very preparedness should make them brave. No one could dishonour a woman who was fearless of death. They had two ways of self-defence—to kill and be killed, or to die without killing. He could teach them the latter, not the former. Above all, he wanted them to be fearless. There was no sin like cowardice.

But there was a moral code even for those who believed in violence. He did not wish them to copy the methods reported to have been adopted in East Bengal. They must have read the Maulana Saheb's statement and the statement issued by the ex-President of All-India Majlis-e-Ahrar. They had said that Islam did not permit forcible conversions or abduction and molestation of women.

After much travail, deep thought and considerable argument, he fixed the date of his departure to Bengal for October 28. "I do not know what I shall be able to do there," he remarked in the course of an argument with a colleague, who had made an eleventh hour effort to dissuade him from setting on a long journey just then. "All I know is that I will not be at peace with myself, unless I go there." He then described the power of thought. "There are two kinds of thoughts, idle and active. There may be myriads of the former swarming in one's brain. They do not count." He likened them to unfertilized ova in a spawn. "But one pure, active thought proceeding from the depth and endowed with the undivided intensity of one's being, becomes dynamic and works like a fertilized ovum." He was averse to putting a curb on the spontaneous urge, which he felt within him to go to the people of Noakhali.

Speaking at the prayer meeting on October 27, he said that he was leaving for Calcutta the next morning. He did not know when God would bring him again to Delhi. He wanted to go to Noakhali from Calcutta. It was a difficult journey and he was in poor health. But one had to do one's duty and trust in God, to make the way smooth. It was not that God always removed hardships from one's path, but He did always enable one to bear them.

He was not going to Bengal to pass judgement on anybody. He was going there as a servant of the people and he would meet the Hindus and Muslims alike. Some Muslims looked upon him as an enemy today. They had not done so always. But he did not mind their anger. Were not his co-religionists angry with him at times? From the age of seventeen, he had learnt the lesson that all mankind, be they of any nationality, colour or country, were his own kith and kin. If they were God's servants, they had to become the servants of all His creation.

It was in that capacity, that he was going to Bengal. He would tell them that the Hindus and Muslims could never be enemies, one of the other. They were born and brought up in India and they had to live and die in India. Change of religion could not alter the fundamental fact. If some people liked to believe that the change of religion changed one's nationality also, even then they need not become enemies.

Sufferings of women had always melted his heart. He wanted to go to Bengal in order to wipe their tears and put heart into them,

if he could. In Calcutta, he would try to see the Governor and the Chief Minister Mr. Suhrawardy and then proceed to Noakhali.

He was proceeding under auspices none too happy. He referred to the ugly demonstrations before Viceroy's House on the day when Jawaharlal and some of his colleagues in the Interim Government were abused and insulted. It was very bad. Why should such things happen, when the two parties, the Muslim League and the Congress, had formed a coalition at the Centre? Praise or abuse made no difference to the leaders who wanted to serve them to the best of their ability. But the people had to behave.

"Let us all still pray and hope that all the ministers will be able to work as a team. If India can speak with one voice, she will be the greatest country in the world, and every true Indian must wish her to attain that status," he said.

The train journey proved to be very strenuous. It was after twelve years that Gandhi was travelling on this line. Naturally there were mammoth crowds at all big stations on the way. They clambered on the roof, choked the windows, broke glass, smashed the wooden shutters and yelled and shouted till one's ears split. They pulled the alarm chain again and again to obtain his *darshan*, making it necessary to disconnect the vacuum brakes. The station authorities tried to drive the crowd away by directing against them the water hose from the hydrant overhead. It made no difference to them, only it flooded the compartment.

Gandhi sat with his fingers thrust into his ears to keep out the shouting and din, when they became unbearable. And yet when it was suggested to him that he might allow lights in the compartment to be switched off to discourage the *darshan*-seekers, he turned down this suggestion. The only way he could requite the simple faith of the masses was, he said, by serving them with his last drop of energy and never to put his personal comfort before what he considered to be his duty towards them.

The train arrived at Lilooah five hours behind time. From the station, he was driven straight to the Khadi Pratisthan Ashram at Sodepur. A big crowd of several hundred had gathered there for the evening prayer. The scheduled time for prayer was half past five. But Gandhi was able to attend the prayer only after seven. In his prayer discourse, he told them how he had never dreamt that he would be coming back to Sodepur so soon. But God had sent him

in their midst again. Train had arrived five hours late. He called that also the will of God. No doubt there were crowds at Aligarh, Khurja Road, Cawnpore and other big stations and the train was detained as a result. But he literally believed in the old maxim that not a blade of grass moves but by His will. Some might say that all his talk about God was a make-believe which he used as a blind to cover his hypocrisy. All he could say was that he was not aware of any hypocrisy in himself. He spoke what he believed to be God's truth. As regards his future plan, he observed that he had come to Calcutta with a blank mind. What he would do here and how long he would stay in Bengal, he did not know. God would indicate to him the next step on reaching Noakhali.

On October 30, he drew their attention to the Viceroy's appeal issued in the name of the whole Cabinet of which the Viceroy was the president and Jawaharlal Nehru the vice-president, and which consisted of both the Congress and Muslim League representatives. The appeal said that the two major communities of India should bury the hatchet and become one at heart. The unity should be genuine, not imposed by the military or the police. He had come to Bengal for that purpose. He took no side. He could only side with truth and justice. He wanted them all to pray with him for the establishment of heart unity between the Muslims and Hindus. Their name would be mud in the world, if they degraded themselves by fighting among themselves like wild beasts.

On the third day of his arrival, he was able to tell his audience that he saw a faint ray of hope that peace might be established between the communities. He had met the Governor and his Chief Minister twice. The visit to the Governor was more or less in the nature of a courtesy call. His main business was with the Chief Minister. As one drove through the deserted streets with garbage heaps, at places banked up nearly two feet high against the pavements, and entire rows of gutted shops and burnt-out houses in the side-streets and the by-lanes, as far as the eye could reach, one felt overcome with a sinking feeling at the mass madness that could turn man into less than the brute. People had been fighting amongst themselves like wild beasts. Fighting could do no good to Calcutta, Bengal, India or the world.

To make peace between the quarrelling parties was his vocation from his early youth. Even while he practised as a lawyer, he tried

to bring the contending parties together. Why could not the two communities be brought together? He was an optimist, he said.

From the people he wanted only this help, that they all should pray with him that this mutual slaughter might stop and the two communities might really become one at heart. Whether India was to become divided or to remain one whole could not be decided by force. It had to be done through mutual understanding. Whether they decided to part or to stay together, they must do so with goodwill and understanding.

He could never be a party to anything which might mean humiliation or loss of self-respect for anyone. Therefore, any peace to be substantial must be honourable, never at the cost of honour.

"Why do you want to go to Noakhali? You did not go to Bombay, or to Ahmedabad and Chapra, where things have happened that are infinitely worse than in Noakhali. Would not your going there only add to the existing tension? Was it because in these places it was the Muslims who had been the sufferers that you did not go there and would go to Noakhali because the sufferers there are the Hindus?" asked a Muslim friend. Gandhi's answer was that he made no distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims. He would certainly have gone straight to any of the places mentioned by the friend, if anything approaching what had happened at Noakhali had happened there, and if he felt that he could do nothing without being on the spot. It was the cry of the outraged womanhood that had peremptorily called him to Noakhali. He felt that he would find his bearings only on seeing things for himself at Noakhali. His technique of non-violence was on trial. It remained to be seen how it would answer in the face of the present crisis. If it had no validity, it were better that he himself should declare his insolvency. He was not going to leave Bengal, until the last embers of the trouble were stamped out. "I may stay here for a whole year or more," he declared. "If necessary, I will die here. But I will not acquiesce in failure. If the only effect of my presence in the flesh is to make people look up to me in hope and expectation which I can do nothing to vindicate, it would be far better that my eyes were closed in death."

He had mentally prepared himself, he added, for the abstention from the Congress session, if necessary. He had similarly disengaged himself mentally from all his responsibilities in respect of Sevagram ashram and Uruli Kanchan.

With all his impatience to get to Noakhali, he had to announce on the fourth day at the prayer gathering that he would not be able to leave for Noakhali on the next day, as he had intended to. The Chief Minister had sent him a word that the train for him could not be arranged so soon. In the meantime, he would try to render whatever service he could to the metropolis.

As the harrowing details of the happenings in Noakhali trickled through, they added to the existing tension. The Bakr Id was close at hand, and it was the wish of the Chief Minister of Bengal and his colleagues that Gandhi should prolong his stay in the city at least till the Bakr Id festival was safely over. The root of the trouble, it was represented to him, lay in Calcutta. If peace could be stabilized in the metropolis, it would have a salutary effect all over. Gandhi acquiesced. The whole of India was faced with a difficult situation, that of Bengal was still more so.

Visit of the four ministers of the Interim Government to Calcutta on November 2 to help the peace efforts was a happy inspiration. It had a salutary effect and for the time being at least an impending crisis was averted. As the ministers' visit coincided with that of the Viceroy, it gave rise to all kinds of speculation. Would the ministers ask the Viceroy to intervene or would they exert pressure on the Bengal Governor to make Bengal ministry take more effective measures? In a series of prayer addresses, Gandhi impressed upon the people how the desire of retaliation and the tendency to look to the Viceroy or the Governor, the military and the police for protection were incompatible with independence to which they were all pledged. The Viceroy's powers vested in the cabinet, the Governor's in the Bengal ministers. If they wanted lasting peace, it must come from the people's hearts. He had been proclaiming from the housetops that no one could protect them except their own stout hearts. No one could ever dishonour the brave. Retaliation was a vicious circle. If they wanted retaliation, they could not have independence. "Supposing someone kills me, you gain nothing by killing someone else in retaliation. And, if you only think over it, who can kill Gandhi, except Gandhi himself? No one can destroy the soul. So, let us dismiss all thought of revenge from our hearts. If we see this, we shall have taken a big stride towards independence."

The warning came none too early. Already there were rumblings of a storm in Bihar. The cry for the reprisals had gone forth. Gandhi

devoted his address on November 3 to show the illogicality and the irrationality of that cry.

From his earliest childhood, he had learnt to dislike the wrong, never the wrongdoer. Therefore, even if the Muslims had done any wrong, they still remained his friends, but it was his duty to tell them that they had done wrong. He had always applied that rule in life with regard to his nearest and dearest. He held that to be the test of true friendship. He had told the audience on the previous day that revenge was not the way of peace, it was not humanity. Hindu scriptures taught forgiveness as the highest virtue. Forgiveness became a brave man. A learned Muslim had come to see him on the day before. He had told him that the teaching of the Koran was also similar. If a man kills one innocent person, he brings upon his head the sin, as it were, of murdering the entire humanity. Islam never approves of, but it condemns murder, arson, forcible conversions, abductions and the like.

If they could not be generous enough to forgive the person who gave them a slap, they could give him one in return. That he could understand. But if the miscreant ran away, and the injured party slapped his relation or co-religionist by way of retaliation, it was below human dignity.

If someone abducted his daughter, he asked, was he to abduct the abductor's or the abductor's friend's daughter? He held it to be infamous. Muslim friends had condemned such acts in Noakhali. But what was he to say of Bihar, if what he was told was true? He was pained beyond measure to hear of the reported happenings in Bihar. He knew the Biharis well. The cry of blood for blood was barbarous. They could not take revenge in Bihar for the happenings in Noakhali. He was told that some Muslims, who were running away from Bihar in panic, were murdered by Bihari Hindus. He was shocked to hear it. He hoped that the report was not true. It was contended that the Mahabharata advocated the way of retaliation. He did not agree with that interpretation. The lesson of the great book was that the victory of the sword was no victory. It taught that the victory of the Pandavas was an empty nothing.

He told them of the talk he had with Shaheed Saheb, the Chief Minister. Years ago, he had met him at Faridpur. Shaheed Saheb then took pride in calling himself his son. He knew that they had various grievances against their Chief Minister. But the latter had

given him his assurance that he wanted peace. It had grieved him to alienate his Hindu friends. He could not disbelieve that assurance till it was found to be untrue. He had by giving that assurance put himself to test. The golden way was to be friends with the world and to regard the whole human family like the members of one family. He who distinguished between one's own family and that of another, mis-educated the members of his own family and opened the way for discord and irreligion.

Immediately on seeing the report of the conflagration in Bihar, Gandhi sent a telegram to Jawaharlal Nehru, who with his three colleagues had proceeded to Patna from Calcutta. Nehru wired in reply that the situation was tense and grave in many parts, but the Government were doing their utmost to bring it under control. He himself with his colleague Abdur Rab Nishtar had decided to stay on in Bihar, as long as it might be necessary.

"The Congress belongs to the people," said Gandhi in his silent day's written message to the prayer congregation on November 4: "The Muslim League belongs to our Muslim brothers and sisters. If Congressmen fail to protect the Muslims where the Congress is in power, then what is the use of a Congress Premier? Similarly, if in a League province the League Premier cannot afford protection to the Hindus, then why is the League Premier there at all? If either of them have to take the aid of the military in order to protect the Muslim or the Hindu minority in their respective provinces, then it only means that none of them actually exercises any control over the general population, when a moment of crisis comes. If that is so, it only means that both of us are inviting the British to retain their sovereignty over India. This is a matter over which each one of us should ponder deeply."

He deprecated the habit of procuring a moral alibi for ourselves by blaming it all on the goondas. "We always put the blame on the goondas. But it is we who are responsible for their creation, as well as encouragement. It is, therefore, not right to say that all the wrong that has been done is the work of the goondas."

He repeated that warning on the next day even more forcefully. The Hindus might say: did not the Muslims start the trouble? He wanted them not to succumb to the temptation for retort, but to think of their own duty and to say firmly that whatever happened, they would not fight. He wanted to tell them that the Muslims who

were with him in the course of the day had assured him that they wanted peace. They were all responsible men. They had said clearly that Pakistan could not be achieved by fighting. If they continued quarrelling with each other, independence would vanish into thin air and that would firmly implant the third power in India, be it the British or any other. India was a vast country, rich in minerals, metals and spices. There was nothing in the world that India did not produce. If they kept on quarrelling, any of the big powers of the world would feel tempted to come and save India from Indians and at the same time exploit her rich resources.

They wanted independence. And they were ready to sacrifice their all for the Congress, the organization which had done so much for India. Were they going to undo all that the Congress had done for more than the last sixty years? He had told them they could return blow for blow, if they were not brave enough to follow the path of non-violence. But there was a moral code for the use of violence as well. Otherwise, the very flames of violence would consume those who lighted them. He did not care, if they were all destroyed. But he could not countenance the destruction of India's freedom.

The reports of the happenings in Bihar were awful, if true. Pandit Nehru had said to the guilty parties that the Central Government would never tolerate such barbarism. They would even use aerial bombing to put it down. But that was the way of the British. The Congress was an organization of the people. Was the Congress to use the foreign mode of destruction against the people whose representative it was? By suppressing the riots with the aid of the military, they would be suppressing India's freedom. And yet what was Jawaharlal to do, if the Congress had lost control over the people? The better way, of course, was to give up the reins of Government, if the people were not amenable to discipline and reason.

To retaliate against the relatives of co-religionists of the wrong-doer was a cowardly act. If they indulged in such acts, they should say good-bye to independence.

On November 5, Rajendra Prasad announced that Gandhi had resolved to undertake a fast unto death, if the communal riots did not stop in Bihar within twenty-four hours. If the worst happened, Gandhi might come down to Bihar and start the fast there.

On the morning of November 6, just before Gandhi was leaving for Noakhali, he issued a statement addressed "To Bihar":

"Bihar of my dreams seems to have falsified them. I am not relying upon the reports that might be prejudiced or exaggerated. The continued presence of the Central Chief Minister and his colleague furnishes an eloquent tale of the tragedy of Bihar. It is easy enough to retort that the things under the Muslim League Government in Bengal were no better if not worse, and that Bihar is merely a result of the latter. A bad act of one party is no justification for a similar act by the opposing party, more especially when it is rightly proud of its longest and largest political record.

"I must confess, too, that although I have been in Calcutta for over a week, I do not yet know the magnitude of Bengal tragedy. Though Bihar calls me, I must not interrupt my programme for Noakhali. And is counter communalism any answer to the communalism of which Congressmen have accused the Muslim League? Is it nationalism to seek barbarously to crush the fourteen per cent of the Muslims in Bihar?

"I do not need to be told that I must not condemn the whole of Bihar for the sake of the sins of a few thousand Biharis. Does not Bihar take credit for one Brajkishore Prasad or one Rajendra Babu? I am afraid, if the misconduct in Bihar continues, all the Hindus of India will be condemned by the world. That is its way, and it is not a bad way either. The misdeeds of Bihari Hindus may justify Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's taunt that the Congress is a Hindu organization, in spite of its boast that it has in its ranks a few Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and others. Bihari Hindus are in honour bound to regard the minority Muslims as their brethren requiring protection, equal with the vast majority of Hindus. Let not Bihar, which has done so much to raise the prestige of the Congress, be the first to dig its grave.

"I am in no way ashamed of my ahimsa. I have come to Bengal to see how far in the nick of time my ahimsa is able to express itself in me. But I do not want in this letter to talk of ahimsa to you. I do want, however, to tell you that what you are reported to have done will never count as an act of bravery. For thousands to do to death a few hundreds is no bravery. It is worse than cowardice. It is unworthy of nationalism and of any religion. If you had given a blow against a blow, no one would have dared to point a finger against you. What you have done is to degrade yourselves and to drag down India.

"You should say to Pandit Jawaharlalji, Sardar Nishtar Saheb and Dr. Rajendra Prasad to take away their military and themselves and attend to the affairs of India. This they can only do, if you repent of your inhumanity and assure them that the Muslims are as much your care as your own brothers and sisters.

"You should not rest, till every Muslim refugee has come back to his own home, which you should undertake to rebuild and ask your ministers to help you to do so. You do not know what critics have said to me about your ministers.

"I regard myself as a part of you. Your affection has compelled that loyalty in me. And since I claim to have better appreciation than you seem to have shown of what the Bihari Hindus should do, I cannot rest till I have done some measure of penance. Predominantly for the reasons of health, I had put myself on the lowest diet possible soon after my reaching Calcutta. That diet now continues as a penance after the knowledge of the Bihar tragedy. The low diet will become a fast unto death, if the erring Biharis have not turned over a new leaf.

"There is no danger of Bihar mistaking my act for anything other than pure penance as a matter of sacred duty.

"No friend should run to me for assistance or to show sympathy. I am surrounded here by loving friends. It would be wholly wrong and irrelevant for any other person to copy me. No sympathetic fast or semi-fast is called for. Such action can only do harm. What my penance should do is to quicken the conscience of those who know me and believe in my bona fides. Let no one be anxious for me. I am like all of us in God's keeping.

"Nothing will happen to me, so long as He wants service through the present tabernacle."

## *A Venture in Faith*

1946

GANDHI would have preferred to travel to Noakhali by the ordinary third class, but the Bengal Government had arranged a special train for him. They had also deputed Mr. Shamsuddin, the Minister for Commerce, Mr. Nasrullah Khan, the parliamentary secretary to the chief minister, and Mr. Abdur Rashid to accompany him. To look to his convenience and to ensure Government help whenever it might be required, the chief minister had himself intended to accompany him, but he was held up in Calcutta. There were huge crowds at Kushtia, Rajbari and Goalando. At these places, Gandhi delivered brief addresses, explaining the object of his visit.

From his early youth, he said, he had made friends with people of all the communities. He had never made any distinction between Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and others. When as a boy he attended the high school at Rajkot, he did not remember a single occasion of a quarrel with a Muslim boy or Parsi boy in the school. During the Khilafat days, he used to say that Shaukat Ali carried him in his pocket. He did not wish to fight. At the same time, he could never countenance peace at the cost of honour or self-respect. He stood for peace, honourable to both the parties. If any party did wrong, he would not hesitate to tell it plainly to their face. That was the duty and the privilege of friendship. He had been a fighter all his life and he would fight oppression and wrong with his last breath, no matter who the wrongdoer was.

He recalled his previous visit to East Bengal during the Khilafat days. Those were the memorable days of the Hindu-Muslim unity, when the Muslims vied with the Hindus in claiming the Congress as their own. The Congress belonged to all. But he was not going to East Bengal this time as a Congressman. He was going there as a servant of God. If he could wipe away the tears of outraged womanhood of Noakhali, he would be more than satisfied.

They were all Indians—Hindus and Muslims. They could not live in independent India as enemies. They had to be friends and brothers. He would go to Noakhali and stay there, till the Hindus and the Muslims again lived as blood brothers that they were and must always remain.

He was hopeful that his tour would have a good effect and the Hindu-Muslim unity of the Khilafat days would come back. In the Khilafat days, no one talked of dividing India. Now they did so. But partitioning, even if it was desirable, could not be so achieved. It could not be retained except by the goodwill of the people concerned. The Bengal ministers had assured him that the Muslims did not believe in getting Pakistan through force.

From Goalando, Gandhi went by a special steamer and steaming down the Padma eighty miles reached Chandpur on the evening of November 6, 1946. Two deputations, one of Muslim Leaguers and the other of Hindus, met Gandhi here.

The first lesson was delivered at Chandpur, when about twenty workers and several representatives of the various relief organizations met him on S.S. *Kiwi* in the morning of November 7. "What goes against the grain in me," he told them, "is that a single individual can be forcibly converted, or a single woman can be kidnapped or raped. So long as we feel we can be subjected to these indignities, we shall continue to be so subjected. If we say we cannot do without the police or military protection, we really confess defeat even before the battle has begun. No police or military in the world can protect people who are cowards. Today you say that thousands of men are terrorizing a mere handful, so what can the latter do? But even a few individuals are enough to terrorize the whole mass, if the latter feel helpless. Your trouble is not numerical inferiority, but the feeling of helplessness that has seized you and the habit of depending on others. The remedy lies with you. That is too why I am opposed to the idea of your evacuating from East Bengal *en masse*. It is no cure for impotence or helplessness."

"East Bengal is opposed to such a move," the deputation said.

"They should not leave," he resumed. "Twenty-thousand able-bodied men, prepared to die like brave men non-violently, might today be regarded as a fairy tale. But it would be no fairy tale for every able-bodied man in a population of 20,000 to die like stalwart soldiers to a man in open fight. They will go down in history like

the immortal five hundred of Leonidas who made Thermopylae." And he quoted the proud epitaph which marked the grave of the Thermopylae heroes:

> Stranger! Tell Sparta, here her sons are laid,
> Such was her law and we that law obeyed.

"I will proclaim from the house-tops," Gandhi continued, "that it is the only condition under which you can live in East Bengal. You have asked for Hindu officers, Hindu police and Hindu military in the place of the Muslim. It is a false cry. You forget that the Hindu officers, the Hindu police and the Hindu military have in the past done all these things: looting, arson, abduction, rape. I come from Kathiawad, the land of petty principalities. I cannot describe to you to what depths of depravity human nature can go. No woman's honour is safe in some principalities and the chief is no hooligan but a duly annointed one."

"These are cases of individual depravity. Here we have got this on a mass scale."

"But the individual there is not alone", Gandhi retorted. "He is backed by the machinery of his little state."

"He is condemned even by his compeers. Here such acts are not condemned by the Muslims."

"I have heard nothing but the condemnation of these acts from Shaheed Suhrawardy downwards, since I have come here. Words of condemnation may tickle your ears. But they are no consolation to the unfortunate women whose houses have been laid desolate or who have been abducted, forcibly converted and forcibly married."

"What a shame for the Hindus and what a disgrace for Islam," he exclaimed warming up. "No, I am not going to leave you in peace. Presently you will say to yourself, 'When will this man leave us and go?' But this man will not go. He did not come on your invitation and he will go on his own only, but with your blessings, when his mission in East Bengal is fulfilled."

"It is a part of their plan for Pakistan," said one member.

"It is midsummer madness and they have realized it. They will soon be sick of it. They have already begun to."

"Why do not they come here then and set this right?"

"That stage will come. Sickness only marks the crisis. Convalescence must precede cure." He added with a sardonic laugh: "You see, I am a nature-curist."

"But here we are a mere drop in the ocean," remarked a worker.

Gandhi replied that even if there was one Hindu in East Bengal, he wanted him to have the courage to go and live in the midst of Muslims and die if he must like a hero. He should refuse to live as a serf and a slave. He might not have the non-violent strength to die without fighting. But he could command their admiration, if he had the courage not to submit to wrong and died fighting like a man. "There is not a man, however cruel and hard-hearted, but would give his admiration to a brave man. A goonda is not the vile man he is imagined to be. He is not without his noble traits."

"A goonda does not understand reason," a worker said.

"But he understands bravery," said Gandhi. "If he finds that you are braver than he, he will respect you."

"You will note," added Gandhi, "that for the purposes of our present discussion, I have not asked you to discard the use of arms. I cannot provide you with arms. It is not for me to provide arms to the Chittagong Armoury Raid men. The most tragic thing about the armoury raid people, is that they could not even multiply themselves. Their bravery was lopsided. It did not infect others."

"No wonder, it could not," exclaimed a worker. "The armoury raid people were condemned."

"By whom?" he asked. "I may have—that is a different thing."

"The people did do. I am myself an armoury raid man."

"They did not. You are no armoury raid man, or you should not have been here to tell these things. That so many of them should have remained living witnesses of the things that have happened is in my eyes a tragedy of the first order. If they had shown the same fearlessness and courage to face death in the present crisis, as they did when they made that raid, then they would have gone down in history as heroes. As it is, they have only inscribed a small footnote in the page of history. You will see I am not, as I have already said, asking you just now to unlearn the use of arms, or to follow my type of heroism. I have not made it good, even in my own case. I have come here to test it in East Bengal. I want you to take up the conventional type of heroism. You should be able to infect others—both men and women—with courage and fearlessness to face death when the alternative is dishonour and humiliation. Then the Hindus can stay in East Bengal, not otherwise. After all, the Muslims are blood of our blood and bone of our bone."

"Here the proportion of Muslims and Hindus is six to one. How can you expect us to stand against such heavy odds?"

"When India was brought under the British subjection, there were 70,000 European soldiers against thirty-three crores of Indians," Gandhi observed.

"We have no arms. Government backs them with their bayonets."

He replied: "The odds were much heavier against the Indians in South Africa. The Indian community there was a mere handful in the midst of an overwhelming majority of Europeans and Negroes. The Europeans had arms. We had none. So we forged the weapon of satyagraha. Today, the Indian is respected by the white man in South Africa, not so the Zulu with all his fine physique."

"So we are to fight with arms anyhow?"

"Not anyhow," retorted Gandhi. "Even violence has its code of ethics. For instance, to butcher the helpless old men, women and children is not bravery, but rank cowardice. Chivalry requires that they should be protected, even at the cost of one's life. The history of early Islam is replete with such instances of chivalry, and Islam is all the stronger for them."

"Would you permit the Hindus to take the offensive?"

"The people of Bihar did and brought disgrace upon themselves and India. They have set the clock of India's independence backward. I have a right to speak about Bihar. In a sense, I feel closer to Bihar than to Bengal, as fortune had enabled me to give a striking demonstration of the non-violence technique in Champaran. I have heard it said that the retaliation in Bihar has 'cooled' the Muslims down. They mean it has cowed them down for the time being. But they forget that two can play at a game. Bihar has forged a link in the chain of our slavery. If the Bihar performance is repeated, or if the Bihar mentality does not mend, you may note down my words in your diary: Before long, India will pass under the yoke of the Big Three, with one of them probably as the mandatory power. The independence of India is today at stake in Bengal and in Bihar. The British Government entrusted the Congress with power not because they are in love with the Congress, but because they had faith that the Congress would use it wisely and well, and not abuse it. Today Jawaharlal Nehru finds the ground slipping from under his feet. But he will not let that happen. That is why he is in Bihar. He has said he is going to stay there, as long as it may be necessary."

"The Biharis have behaved as cowards," he added with deep anguish. "Use your arms well, if you must. Do not ill-use them. Bihar has not used its arms well. If the Biharis wanted to retaliate, they could have gone to Noakhali and died to a man. But for a thousand Hindus to fall upon a handful of Muslims—men, women and children—living in their midst, is no retaliation, but just brutality. It is the privilege of arms to protect the weak and helpless. The best succour that Bihar could have given to the Hindus of East Bengal would have been to guarantee with their own lives the absolute safety of the Muslim population living in their midst. Their example would have told. And I have faith that they will still do so with due repentance, when the present madness has passed away. Anyway that is the price I have put upon my own life, if they want me to live. Here ends the first lesson."

A deputation consisting of several prominent Muslim Leaguers of Tipperah district met him at Chandpur on board the *Kiwi* before he entrained for Chaumuhani on the morning of November 7.

One of them remarked that no disturbances had taken place in Chandpur sub-division. The rush of refugees to Chandpur was due to panic caused by false press propaganda. The number of Hindus killed by the Muslims was only fifteen, while double that number of Muslims had died as a result of firing by the military who mostly were Hindus.

Another member of that deputation was even bitter about the fact that the Hindus were still evacuating and their rehabilitation was being "obstructed" by the Hindu workers who encouraged them to migrate in order to discredit the Muslim League Government and paralyse the administration.

Gandhi replied that if what they had said was to be taken at its face value, then it amounted to this: that the Muslims had committed no excesses. The mischief had all been provoked by the excesses of the police and the military who were harassing the Muslims and it was they, therefore, who together with the panic-mongering Hindus, were the real culprits. That was too big a pill for anybody to swallow. Why had it become necessary to call the military, if no disturbances had taken place? A deputation of the Hindus had a meeting with him in the morning. They had told him awful tales of what had happened in Tipperah and Noakhali. Similar tales had been pouring into his ears, ever since he had set his foot in Bengal.

Even Muslim Leaguers had admitted that terrible things had been done. They disputed the figures which they feared were exaggerated. He was not concerned with the numbers. Even if there was a single case of abduction or forcible conversion or forcible marriage, it was enough to make every god-fearing man or woman hang down his or her head in shame.

He was not going to keep anything secret. He would place all the information which he might receive before the Bengal ministers. He had come to promote mutual goodwill and confidence. In that, he wanted their help. He did not want peace to be established with the help of the police and the military. An imposed peace was no peace. He did not wish to encourage people to flee from their homes in East Bengal either. If the mass flight of the refugees had been deliberately planned to discredit Muslim League ministry, it would recoil on the heads of those who had done so. To him it seemed hardly credible. He said that the right course would be to make a clean breast of the matter. "It is far better to magnify your own mistake and proclaim it to the whole world than leave it to the world to point the accusing finger at you. God never spares the evil-doer."

The person who had spoken first admitted that he had heard of some cases of arson and looting, but looting had taken place after the occupants had run away. The deserted houses offered too strong a temptation to the hooligans.

"But why should the people flee from their homes?" asked Gandhi sharply. "People do not do so normally. Everybody knows that an unoccupied and unprotected house is bound to be looted by some one or the other. Would any one risk the loss of all he owns, just to discredit the League?"

Still another member of the deputation remarked that only one per cent of the people had indulged in the acts of hooliganism. The rest of the ninety-nine per cent were really good people and in no way responsible for the happenings.

"That is not the correct way of looking at it," said Gandhi. "If ninety-nine per cent were good people and had actively disapproved of what had taken place, the one per cent would have been able to do nothing and could easily have been brought to book. The good people ought to actively combat the evil, to entitle them to that name. Sitting on the fence was no good. If they did not mean it, they should say so, and openly tell all the Hindus in the Muslim

majority areas to quit. But that was not their position, as he understood it. The Qaid-e-Azam had said that the minorities in Pakistan would get unadulterated justice in Pakistan. Where was that justice? Today the Hindus asked him if Noakhali was an indication of what they were to expect in Pakistan. He had studied Islam carefully. His Muslim friends in South Africa used to say to him: "Why not recite the Kalma and forget Hinduism?" He used to say in reply that he would gladly recite the Kalma but forget Hinduism never. His respect and his regard for Hazrat Mahomed was not less than theirs. But authoritarianism and compulsion was the way to corrupt religion, not to advance it.

Mr. McInerny, the District Magistrate of Noakhali, in a leaflet he had issued, had said that he would assume, unless the contrary was conclusively proved, that anyone who accepted Islam after the beginning of the recent disturbances was forcibly converted and in fact remained a Hindu. "If all the Muslims made that declaration," said Gandhi, "it would go a long way to settle the question. Why should there be a public show of it, if anyone genuinely felt inclined to recite the Kalma? A heart conversion needs no other witness than God." Mere recitation of the Kalma, while one continued to indulge in the acts which were contrary to elementary decency, was not Islam, but a travesty of it. That reminded him of the Plymouth Brothers who invited him to embrace Christianity, because then he would be free to do anything he liked, since Christ redeemed the sins of those who accepted Him. As against that, there was the conclusive verse of the New Testament. "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, with his lips comes to Me." It was, therefore, up to Muslim leaders to declare that the forcible repetition of a formula could not make a non-Muslim into a Muslim. It only shamed Islam.

"All that has happened is the result of false propaganda," argued a member of the deputation.

Gandhi said, "Let us not make a scapegoat of false propaganda. False propaganda would fall flat, if we were all right."

One of the deputationists remarked that they were all prepared to go into the interior along with the Hindu leaders to restore peace and confidence, but the latter distrusted them.

Gandhi replied that did not matter. He would gladly accept their offer. "You and I will visit every village and every home in the interior and restore peace and confidence."

At Laksam, about thirty miles from Chandpur, there was one refugee camp. And it was to the refugees that Gandhi's words were addressed through the crowd that had assembled at the platform to hear him and have his *darshan*: "I have not come on a whirlwind propaganda visit. I have come to stay here with you, as one of you. I have no provincialism in me. I claim to be an Indian and, therefore, a Bengali, even as I am a Gujarati. I have vowed to myself that I will stay on here and die here, if necessary, but I will not leave Bengal till the hatchet is finally buried and a solitary Hindu girl is not afraid to move freely about in the midst of Muslims."

"The greatest help you can give me is to banish fear from your hearts," he said. "You may say you do not believe in Him. You do not know that but for His will you could not draw a single breath. Call Him Ishwar, Allah, God, Ahura Mazad. His names are as innumerable as there are men. He is one without a second. He alone is great. There is none greater than He. He is timeless, formless and stainless. Such is my Rama. He alone is my Lord and Master."

He touchingly described to them how as a little boy he used to be usually timid and afraid of even the shadows and how his nurse had taught him the secret of Ramanam, as an antidote to fear. "When in fear, take Ramanam. He will protect you," she used to tell him. Ever since then, Ramanam had been his unfailing refuge and shelter from all kinds of fear.

"He resides in the heart of the pure," he added. "Tulsidas, that prince of the devotees, whose name has become a household word among the Hindus from Kashmir to Cape Comorin, as Chaitanya's and Ramkrishna's in Bengal, has presented the message of that name to us in his immortal Ramayan. If you walk in fear of that name, you need fear no man on earth, be he a prince or pauper." Why should they be afraid of the cry of Allah-O-Akbar? Allah of Islam was the protector of innocence. What had been done in East Bengal had not the sanction of Islam as preached by its Prophet.

Who could dare to dishonour their wives or daughters, if they had faith in God? He, therefore, expected them to cease to be afraid of the Muslims. If they believed in Ramanam, they must not think of leaving East Bengal. They must live where they were born and brought up, and die there, if necessary, defending their honour, as brave men and women. "For, to run away from danger, instead of facing it, is to deny one's faith in man and God, and even one's

own self. It were better for one to drown oneself, than live to declare such bankruptcy of faith."

Why should the people feel secure only under the protection of the police and the military? "If you ask the military, they will tell you that God is their protector. I want you, therefore, to be able to say to Shamsuddin Saheb that you no longer need the protection of the police and the military which may be withdrawn, but would rather put yourself under the protection of Him, whose protection they all seek."

On November 7 the party reached Chaumuhani, where Gandhi fixed up his headquarters temporarily. At the prayer meeting, that was held on the first day of his arrival, there was a gathering of not less than 15,000. A large number had come from the places round about Chaumuhani. About eighty per cent of these were Muslims. The town itself had remained free from the communal excesses, but round about it, the whole area had been set ablaze. At the prayer meeting, Gandhi poured out his soul for over twenty minutes. He told them how he had toured East Bengal in the company of the Ali brothers during the Khilafat days. In those days, the Muslims felt that all that he said was right. If the Ali brothers went into a women's meeting, they went blindfolded. But he was allowed to go with his eyes open. Why should he blindfold himself, when he went to his mothers and sisters? He had no desire to go among purdah ladies. But the Ali brothers insisted that he must go. The women were eager to meet him and they were sure that his advice would do good to them. In South Africa, he had lived in the midst of Muslim friends for twenty years. They treated him as a member of their own family and told their wives and sisters that they need not observe purdah with him. He had become a barrister in England, but what was a dinner barrister worth? It was South Africa and the struggle that he had launched there that had made him. It was there that he discovered satyagraha and civil disobedience.

He had come to them in sadness. What sin had Mother India committed that her children, the Hindus and Muslims, were quarrelling with each other? He had learnt that no Hindu woman was safe today in some of the parts of East Bengal. Ever since he had come to Bengal, he was hearing awful tales of Muslim atrocities. Shaheed Saheb, their chief minister, and Shamsuddin Saheb had admitted that there was some truth in the reports that one heard.

"I have not come to excite Hindus to fight Muslims," he said. "I have no enemies. I have fought the British all my life. Yet they are my friends. I have never wished them ill."

He heard of forcible conversions, forcible feeding of beef, abductions and forcible marriages, not to talk about the murders, arson and loot. They had broken idols. The Muslims did not worship them, nor did he. But why should they interfere with those who wished to worship them? These incidents are a blot on the name of Islam. "I have studied the Koran. The very word Islam means peace. And the Muslim greeting 'Salaam Alaikum' is the same for all, whether Hindus or Muslims, or any other. Nowhere does Islam allow such things as had happened in Noakhali and Tipperah." Shaheed Saheb and all the ministers and League leaders who met him in Calcutta had condemned such acts unequivocally. "The Muslims are in such overwhelming majority in East Bengal that I expect them to constitute themselves the guardians of the small Hindu minority. They should tell the Hindu women that, while they are there, no one dare cast an evil eye on them," he said in conclusion.

The lesson in fearlessness which Gandhi had begun at Chandpur was continued even in more forceful language at Chaumuhani and elsewhere. In fact, it had become the central theme of all his talks. "The tragedy is not that so many Muslims have gone mad," he remarked to a worker at Chaumuhani, "but that so many Hindus in East Bengal have been witnesses to all these things. If every Hindu in East Bengal had been done to death, I would not have minded it. Do you know what the Rajputs did? They killed the women-folk when they issued forth to sacrifice themselves on the battlefield. The surviving ones immolated themselves by mounting the funeral pyre before the fortress fell, rather than allow themselves to be captured and dishonoured. There is nothing courageous in thousands of Muslims killing out a handful of Hindus in their midst, but that the Hindus should have degraded themselves by such cowardice, being witnesses to abduction and rape, forcible conversion and forcible marriage of their womenfolk, is heart-rending."

"How can we create a sense of security and self-confidence?" a worker asked.

"By learning to die bravely. Let us turn our wrath against ourselves. I am not interested in getting the police substituted by the military, or Muslim police by Hindu police. They are broken reeds."

"To whom should we appeal—the Congress, the League or the British Government?"

"To none of these. Appeal to yourselves, therefore, to God."

"We are men—made of flesh and blood. We need some material support."

"Then appeal to your own flesh and blood. Purify it of all dross," replied Gandhi.

On November 8, Gandhi accompanied by Mr. Nasrullah and Mr. Abdur Rashid, Mr. McInerny and the superintendent of police, motored from Chaumuhani to the village of Gopairbag. Here buried deep in the midst of the thick groves of the slender arecanut and coconut palms were scattered five clusters of huts occupied by the Hindu families, in the midst of nearly fifty times that number of the Muslim families. There had been murder and arson. The place of worship had been desecrated. The corpses of slaughtered men were piled up in a heap in one corner of the courtyard and burnt. The charred remains of what was once flesh and blood bore witness to the grim tragedy. There were blood stains on the door-steps of some of the houses. Floors in many houses had been dug up in search of hidden cash or jewels. The odour of death still hung over the place. It was a picture of desolation. Three girls had been abducted from the house, two of whom were still missing.

On his way back in the evening, Gandhi halted at Dewanbari at Dattapara village, where tact and presence of mind combined with good luck had enabled the Dewanji family to escape from the fate of the Patwari family at Gopairbag. The place itself was turned into a camp holding about 6,000 refugees. He discussed here with the district authorities the question of repatriation of the refugees to their respective homes. Some local Muslim League members had also been invited and took part in the discussion.

Addressing a meeting, Gandhi said that it was a shame for both the Hindus and the Muslims that the Hindus should have to run away from their homes as they had done. It was a shame for the Muslims, because it was out of fear of the Muslims that the Hindus had run away. Why should a human being inspire another with fear? It was no less a shame for the Hindus to have given way to craven fear. He had always said, man should fear none but God. The Government officials accompanying him were all anxious that they should return to their homes. To feed and to clothe thousands

in one place involved great difficulties for the refugees as well as for the Government. The Government officials were ashamed of the fact that such things should have taken place in their jurisdiction. He wanted them to forgive and to forget what had happened in Noakhali and Tipperah districts. That did not mean that they were to become cowards. But it served no useful purpose to keep on recalling the unpleasant past. He hoped and prayed that the Hindus and Muslims of these parts would become friends once more. He knew that the Hindus had suffered a lot, and were suffering still. He would not ask them to return to their homes, till at least one good Muslim and one good Hindu came forward to accompany them and stand surety for their safety in each village. He was sure that there were plenty of good Hindus and good Muslims in these parts, who would give the necessary guarantee.

A Muslim stated they had already given them the assurance that they would look after them, but Hindus would not listen to them. Gandhi replied that they should try to understand and appreciate the reasons of Hindus' distrust and overcome their fear. One Hindu refugee got up and asked how Hindus could have confidence in the assurances of Muslims any more. When the trouble was threatening, the Muslims had promised to look after them but had failed to protect them afterwards. Besides, where were they to go and stay? They had lost their all. Were they to go back and stay in the jungles? And when fifty good Muslims in the village had failed to save them on the previous occasion, how would one good Muslim do so now? Gandhi replied that the Government would see that their huts were rebuilt and they had food and clothing, when they returned to their homes. But whatever might have happened in the past, if now one good Muslim and one good Hindu took the responsibility for their safety in each village, they could rely on their word, backed as it would be by the collective invitation of all the Muslims in the village. If they were still afraid, they were cowards, and not even God could help the cowardly.

The next day, he shifted his camp to Dattapara, in order to visit more affected villages in the interior. On November 10, he addressed a prayer meeting in which eighty per cent were Muslims:

"Whether you believe me or not, I want to assure you that I am a servant of both the Hindus and the Muslims. I have not come here to fight Pakistan. If India is destined to be partitioned, I cannot

prevent it. But I wish to tell you that Pakistan can't be established by force. In the *bhajan* that was sung, the poet has likened God to the philosopher's stone. The proverbial philosopher's stone is said to turn iron into gold. That is not always desirable. For instance, if all rails of the railway track were turned into gold by the touch of the stone, the trains would not be able to run over them. But the touch of God purifies the soul. That is always desirable.

"That philosopher's stone is within us all. All that I wish to tell my Muslim brethren is that, whether they live as one people or two, they should live as friends with the Hindus. If they do not wish to do so, they should say so plainly. I would in that case confess myself defeated. The refugees cannot stay on as refugees for ever. The Government cannot go on feeding them. And what sort of food are they getting? Less than half the daily ration of cereals to keep an able-bodied man alive, no fish, no vegetables, nor anything else to supplement it. It is not possible for them to exist like this for any length of time. If, therefore, the Muslims do not want them back in their villages, they must go elsewhere.

"But even if every Hindu of East Bengal went away, I will still continue to live amidst the Muslims of East Bengal and eat what they give me and what I consider lawful for me to partake of. I will not bring my food from outside. I do not need fish or flesh. All that I need is a little fruit, vegetables and some goat's milk. As far as goat's milk and cereals are concerned, I would take them again only when it pleases God that I should do so. I have given it up and would not resume it, till Hindus were really penitent of what they had done in Bihar.

"For a thousand Hindus to surround a hundred Muslims or for a thousand Muslims to surround a hundred Hindus and to oppress them is not bravery but cowardice. A fair fight means even numbers and previous notice. It does not mean that I approve of their fighting. It has been said that the Hindus and the Muslims cannot stay together as friends, or co-operate with each other. No one can make me believe that, but if that is your belief, you should say so. I would in that case not ask the Hindus to return to their homes. They would have East Bengal and it would be a shame for both the Muslims and Hindus. If on the other hand, you want the Hindus to stay in your midst, you should tell them that they need not look to the military for protection, but to their Muslim brethren instead.

Their daughters and sisters and mothers are your own daughters, sisters and mothers, and you should protect them with your lives.

"One person is said to have returned to his village last evening after the prayer meeting. He found his house surrounded by the Muslims. They would not let the man take his property. How can I, under these circumstances, if they are true, ask anyone to go back? You should ponder over what I have said, and let me know what you really wish. I shall advise the Hindus accordingly.

"I am told and I believe that there are many good Muslims who would welcome the Hindus back, but goondas stand in the way. I wish to tell you that if the good Muslims spoke out with one voice and acted according to their professions, the so-called goondas would become ineffective and would mend their ways."

The 11th was Gandhi's day of silence. All the same, he visited the villages of Noakhala, Sonachaka and Khilpara, all in the Lakhimpur thana. The journey was partly by motor and partly by boats which were punted with difficulty in *khals*, that were choked with thickly tangled masses of water hyacinth. At Noakhala, eight people were said to have been murdered including a school-boy of fifteen. Four skulls and the charred remains of the bones were scattered all over the place. The houses had almost all been burnt down. In the house, where the boy was murdered, his school-books and freshly written exercise books were strewn over the floor. The betelnut and the coconut trees surrounding the houses were scorched. And those that were not killed or did not run away were said to have been converted, including a deaf-mute, who by piteous signs showed the tuft of hair in a piece of cloth which had been removed from his head and to which he still clung. The few women that remained were all weeping and wailing. At Sonachak, the place of worship had been desecrated and set fire to. Broken images lay on footpaths and in the debris inside the ruined temple.

In a written message, that was read out at the prayer gathering, Gandhi said that wherever he had gone, he had seen burnt houses and heard stories of looting and of forcible conversions. The Hindu women were without the auspicious vermilion mark on their heads and foreheads and without their conchshell bangles. How he wished that all Muslim brothers would condemn these atrocities with one voice, so that Hindus could go back to their homes and live there, as they used to before the disturbances. Their houses would be rebuilt

before they could go back. The Muslims should help in that. Such he believed was the injunction of the holy Koran too.

The next day at the evening prayer gathering, which mostly consisted of refugees, he again referred to the question of repatriation. The maulvi, who had addressed the audience before him, had invited them in the name of the Muslims to return to their homes. But it was not so easy in action, as it was in speech. Everyone was anxious to see the two communities live in peace and harmony once again. For that, it was not necessary that they should have the same religion. He had seen awful sights of destruction. He had seen the terror-stricken faces of sufferers. They had been forcibly converted once, and they were afraid the same thing would be repeated. He wanted them to shed that fear. He alone deserved to live who refused to give up God's name. They must learn to face death, rather than give up Ramanam. He was not enamoured of the military and the police. The function of the police was to arrest the thieves and dacoits, that of the military to guard them against foreign aggression. The police and military could not teach them to cease fighting among themselves and live as friends. He referred to the scheme for repatriation, but it could work only if Muslim League wished to have peace and fully co-operated. Shamsuddin Saheb was coming in two or three days. They would hear from him what the League Government wanted to do.

Visits to the village of Gomatoli and Nandigram completed his programme in Lakhimpur thana. In Nandigram alone, about 600 houses had been burnt down. The twisted and blackened pieces of corrugated sheets that once constituted roofings littered the ground among heaps of cinders and debris. A school building, a hostel and a hospital were reduced to ashes. The scorched coconut and arecanut palms marked the site of arson. The temple belonging to the leading family of the village had been desecrated.

Early in the morning, on November 13, Gandhi announced to his party an important decision. He had decided to disperse his party detailing each member, including the women, to settle down in one affected village and to make himself or herself hostage of the safety and security of the Hindu minority of that village. They must be pledged to protect with their lives, if necessary, the Hindu population of that village. His decision was not binding on any one of his party, he said. Those who wanted to were free to go away and take

up any of his other constructive activities. "Those who have ill will against the Muslims or Islam in their hearts or cannot curb their indignation at what has happened should stay away. They will only misrepresent me by working under this plan."

So far as he was concerned, his decision was final and irrevocable and left no room for a discussion. He was going to bury himself in East Bengal, until such time that the Hindus and Muslims learnt to live together in harmony and peace. He would deprive himself of the services of all his companions and fend for himself with whatever assistance he could command locally.

That evening, he explained his idea further to the party. A discussion followed, in which Thakkar Bapa and Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani took part. His ahimsa would be incomplete, he said, unless he took that step. Either ahimsa was the law of life or it was not.

"I know the women of Bengal better than probably the Bengalis do. Today, they feel crushed and helpless. Sacrifice of myself and my companions would at least teach them the art of dying with self-respect. It might open too the eyes of the oppressors and melt their hearts. I do not say that the moment my eyes are closed, theirs will open. But that will be the ultimate result, I have not the slightest doubt. If ahimsa disappears, Hindu *dharma* disappears."

"The issue is not religious, but political. This is not a movement against the Hindus, but against the Congress," said one.

Gandhi said: "Do you not see that they think that the Congress is a purely Hindu body? And do not forget that I have no water-tight compartments such as religious and political and others. Let us not lose ourselves in a forest of words. How to solve the tangle—violently or nonviolently—is the question. In other words, has my method efficacy today?"

"How can you reason with the people who are thirsting for your blood? Only the other day, one of our workers was murdered."

"I know it," said Gandhi. "To quell the rage is our job."

Another member asked whether it was right to invite the people to return to their villages under the prevailing conditions. Gandhi's view was that there was no harm in asking them to return to their villages, if the Muslims of that village collectively guaranteed their safety, and their guarantee was backed by one good Hindu and one good Muslim, who would stay with them in that village and protect them by laying down their lives, if necessary. And if there was that

much guarantee, the refugees ought to return to their homes and face whatever risk there might be. If they had not the courage to live on these terms, then Hinduism was doomed to disappear from East Bengal. The question of East Bengal is not one of Bengal alone. The battle for India is today being decided in East Bengal. Today the Muslims are being taught by some that the Hindu religion is an abomination and, therefore, forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam a merit. It would save to Islam at least the descendants of those who were forcibly converted. If retaliation is to rule the day, the Hindus, in order to win, will have to outstrip the Muslims in nefarious deeds that the latter are reported to have done. The United Nations set out to fight Hitler with Hitler's weapons, and ended by out-Hitlering Hitler."

"How can we reassure the people, when the miscreants are still at large in these villages?" was the last question.

"That is why," replied Gandhi, "I have insisted upon one good Muslim standing security, along with a good Hindu, for the safety and security of those who might be returning. And the former will have to be provided by the Muslim Leaguers who form the Bengal Government."

In a letter to a worker, he wrote from Dattapara: "The work I am now engaged in here may be my last act. If I return from here alive and unscathed, it will be like a new birth to me. My ahimsa is being tried here through and through, as it was never before."

Gandhi shifted from Dattapara to Kazirkhil on November 14th. On the way, he stopped at Shahapur where a public meeting had been arranged. Gandhi had been told that there would be a huge gathering at Shahapur. But someone had spread a rumour that he would be accompanied by the superintendent of police, the district magistrate and an armed guard, who would utilize the occasion for making arrests, with the result that a few people were in evidence when he arrived there. It was a cruel joke, said Gandhi. For, so far as he was concerned, he had never wanted any police or district authority to accompany him. But the authorities said, they could not take the risk of letting him go about unprotected.

It had been brought to his notice that in several places, while the local Muslims professed to be anxious that peace should be re-established, they were not prepared to do anything for it or to give any guarantee, unless the Muslim League leaders asked them to.

Gandhi, recognizing the reasonableness of their suggestion, referred to a statement of Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah, which he had read that very morning. He did not like everything in that statement, but there were certain things in it, which should commend themselves to all. In the statement, the Qaid-e-Azam had said: "If the Musalmans lose their balance, give vent to the spirit of vengeance and retaliation and prove false to the highest codes of morality and preachings of our great religion Islam, you will not only lose your title to the claim of Pakistan, but also it will start the vicious circle of bloodshed and cruelty, which will at once put off the day of our freedom and we shall only be helping to prolong the period of slavery and bondage." He had further said: "We must prove politically that we are brave, generous and trustworthy, that in the Pakistan areas the minorities will enjoy the fullest security of life, property and honour just as the Musalmans themselves, nay even greater." He would like them, remarked Gandhi, to ponder over that statement, if on examination they found that his quotation was correct. Murder, loot, arson, abduction, forcible marriages and forcible conversions could not but prolong India's slavery. If they kept on quarrelling among themselves, if they looked to the police and military for protection, they would be inciting a third party to rule over them.

At Kazirkhil, Gandhi's camp had been fixed up in a partially devastated house. The miscreants were not able to burn down the place completely. An advance party of Satish Babu's workers had cleaned it up and made it habitable. There was a small meeting for prayers in the compound of the house. Addressing the audience on the first day, Gandhi said that he found indescribable peace in the natural scenery around him but he found that peace missing on the faces of men and women. And how could they have peace after all that they had been through? He found guards standing there to protect him. Against whom were they to protect him? He was not used to go about with a guard. He toured in Bengal unprotected before this. But today the authorities would not let him do so. It was a matter of sorrow and shame for him, and, more than him, it should be a matter of shame for the Muslims of East Bengal.

The happenings in East Bengal, he stated, had hurt him deeply. The hearts of the people had to be purged of hatred. For that the Muslims' help and co-operation was necessary. This fratricide was more awful than anything in his experience. He had carried on a

very grim struggle for twenty years in South Africa and for the last thirty years in India. But this mutual slaughter had nonplussed him. He did not know how he could induce the two communities to live in peace and harmony again. He had come to Bengal to find a solution for the problem. Bengal was a big province. If the communal problem could be solved here, it would be solved elsewhere also. If he succeeded here, then he would go away from Bengal with a new lease of life. If not, he wished God to remove him from this earth. He did not wish to leave Bengal empty-handed. The word "pessimism" was not to be found in his dictionary.

Muslims butchered Hindus and did worse things than butchery in Bengal, and Hindus butchered Muslims in Bihar. When both acted wickedly, it was no use making comparisons or saying that one was less wicked than the other or who started the trouble. If they wished to take revenge, they should learn the art from him. He also took revenge, but it was of a different type. He had read a Gujarati poem in his childhood, which said: "If to him who gives you a glass of water, you give two, there is no merit in it. The real merit lies in doing good to him, who does you evil." "That," concluded Gandhi, "I consider noble revenge."

He said he had read a story about one of the earlier Caliphs. A man attacked the Caliph with a sword and the Caliph wrested the sword from the assailant's hand and was going to kill him, when the assailant spat on his face. The Caliph thereupon let him go free because the indignity had filled him with personal anger. This produced a great impression upon the assailant and he embraced Islam. One who was forcibly converted to Islam ceased to be a man. To recite the Kalma through fear was meaningless.

In the prayer meeting of November 15, Gandhi emphasized his previous day's appeal. He could talk to them of nothing but sorrow and suffering these days. Wherever he went, he saw awful sights of destruction. There were no tears in his eyes. He who shed tears could not wipe those of others, but his heart did weep. He had come with the hope that he could have a frank talk with Muslims and that they would repent of their misdeeds and request the Hindus not to leave their homes. And if the repentance was genuine, the Hindus would recognize their sincerity, and regain lost confidence. But he could see that the Hindus and the Muslims of East Bengal had been embittered against one another. He would not go into the

reasons thereof. But the Muslim brethren would permit him to say that, so far as he knew, in East Bengal they had been the aggressors. The Hindus were mortally afraid of them. At Chaumuhani, Muslims came to his meeting in large numbers, larger than the Hindus. But he did not know why they were avoiding him after the first meeting at Dattapara. It hurt him. He wanted the few Muslims, who were present in the meeting, to carry his message to the rest. A Muslim sister, who had been going about meeting the leading Muslims in these parts, had said that the Muslims told her plainly that they wanted orders from the League leaders before they could promise to befriend the Hindus, or to attend his meetings. The exodus of the Hindus was still continuing. If the Muslims assured them that they were neighbours, friends and brothers, sons of the same soil, breathing the same air and drinking the same water, and that the Hindus had nothing to fear from them, the exodus would stop and even those who had left their homes would return. Even animals were friendly to those who befriended them. But man was made in the image of God. To justify his inheritance, man had to return good for evil. Whosesoever was the fault, this truth applied to both the parties. The Muslims wanted orders from the League. He could understand it. There was a League Government in the province. But that did not mean that the Government should be inimical to those outside the League. He reiterated what he said about Jinnah's message on the previous day. They should search their hearts and ask themselves if they had lived up to that message.

When Gandhi shifted to Kazirkhil, he had moved another step forward. He must live in a Muslim household, if a good Muslim Leaguer approved of by the Bengal ministry would be prepared to receive him as a member of the family. He discussed the question with the Minister for Civil Supplies, who saw him on November 16. Gandhi asked him if he could recommend him to any. The minister was taken aback at Gandhi's living stripped of all his companions in the midst of those who would not know how to look after him. "I shall look after myself," argued Gandhi. "I shall need nobody's service." "Then, I am afraid, I must say that no Muslim family is prepared to receive you," replied the minister laughing.

Gandhi addressing a prayer meeting began by referring to Shamsuddin's speech at Chaumuhani a few days earlier. They had now heard Goffran Saheb. Ministers wanted them to live together as

friends. The police and the military could not protect them. God alone could protect them. They had, therefore, to look to each other for their safety. Goffran Saheb had told them that the Government did not wish the Hindus to leave East Bengal. Awful things had, no doubt, happened, but they should let bygones be bygones. The people must turn a new leaf. When one had suffered, as they had, one was liable to become filled with suspicion. But that had to be overcome. A member from the audience had requested him to allow him five minutes to reply to Goffran Saheb's speech which, he said, required correction in several places. But Gandhi replied that he was afraid he could not allow the meeting to be turned into a public debate. Whatever was said at the meeting was said in good faith and to do his work. But if the friend in question sent him a letter, not couched offensively, he would gladly forward that to Goffran Saheb. He was glad to see the Congress and the League flags flying together at the prayer ground. Both had great significance. They should realize as Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah had said that if they kept on quarrelling among themselves, then the country would remain a slave country and Pakistan would vanish into thin air. He was receiving some threatening letters. Some Muslims feared that he had come to suppress them. He could assure them that he had never suppressed one in all his life. They asked him why had he not gone to Bihar. He had declared his resolve to fast, if Bihar did not stop the madness. He was in constant touch with Bihar. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and the others had assured him that his presence there was not required. Bihar, he understood, was practically peaceful now. The tension was still there, but it was going. The Muslims were returning to their villages. The Government had taken the responsibility to build the houses of those who had been rendered homeless. He was also receiving angry telegrams from the Hindus asking why he did not fast against the Muslims for the happenings in Bengal. He could not do so today. If the Muslims realized that he was their friend, he would be entitled to fast against them also. If he was to leave East Bengal, he would go only after peace ruled the breasts of the Hindus and the Muslims. He had no desire to live any longer otherwise.

He was in the midst of a Muslim population in Noakhali. He did not like the idea of staying with the Hindu friends. He would like to see, if he could stay with a League Muslim. "My requirements are

very few," he said. "All I want is cleanliness, clean water, permissible food and the freedom to pray to God in my own way." The idea was that if the Hindus saw him living with a Muslim Leaguer friend, they would probably get back their confidence and return to their homes more readily. "The Muslim friends will have an opportunity to examine me at close quarters and find out whether I am an enemy or friend."

But he did not want to postpone his new "venture in faith", till a Muslim household was ready to receive him. "When I was in detention in the Aga Khan Palace," he remarked, "I once sat down to write a thesis on India as a protagonist of non-violence. But as I proceeded with my writing, I could not go on. I had to stop. There are two aspects of Hinduism. There is on the one hand the historical Hinduism with its untouchability, superstitious worship of stocks and stones, animal sacrifice and so on. On the other hand, we have the Hinduism of the Gita, the Upanishads and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* which is the acme of ahimsa and oneness of all creation, pure worship of one immanent, formless and imperishable God. Non-violence which to me is the chief glory of Hinduism has been sought to be explained away by our people as being meant for the *sanyasis* only. I do not share that view. I have held that it is the way of life and India has to show it to the world. Where do I stand? Do I represent this ahimsa in my person? If I do, then deceit and hatred that now poison the atmosphere should dissolve. It is only by going into isolation from my companions, those on whose help I have relied all along, and standing on my own crutches, that I shall find my bearings and also test my faith in God."

To the inmates of the Sevagram ashram he wrote: "I am afraid you must give up all hope of my early returning or returning at all to the ashram. The same applies to my companions. It is a Herculean task that faces me. I am being tested. Is the satyagraha of my conception a weapon of the weak, or really that of the strong? I must either realize the latter, or lay down my life in the attempt to attain it. That is my quest. In pursuit of it, I have come to bury myself in this devastated village. His will be done."

On the morning of November 17, Gandhi visited the village of Dasgharia, two miles from Kazirkhil, where he was met by a large number of women. They had all been forcibly converted and now reverted to their own religion. The district magistrate had issued the

orders and advertised the fact that the forcible conversions, conversions out of fear, would not be recognized by law. Gandhi said that he did not know if everyone of those who had been converted forcibly had been restored to Hinduism. If not, it should be done, if they wanted to replace the present bitterness between the two communities by cordiality.

Some abducted girls were still missing. They should be returned without further delay. A washerman had brought to him his boy of one year this afternoon. He had recovered the child after a month from a Muslim with the police help. It was the duty of the Muslim brethren to put an end to such acts. They should make a frank confession of error in the past and should promise to avoid it in future. He, who tried to hide his mistakes, could never rectify them. He himself was a votary of truth. Even when he practised law, he told his clients to tell him the truth, if they wanted him to take up their case. He would not plead for a false case. The result was that only true and bona fide cases were brought to him. He had long ceased to practise law and had even been struck off the rolls of the bar register for the offence of sedition. But he continued to follow the same principle. His advice to the Hindus and the Muslims was to get rid of all evil in themselves. Without that, they would not be able to live in peace, or have respect for one another.

He described the anatomy of fear in the course of a written message which was read out at Kazirkhil on the 18th. In fact, this was the central theme of all his addresses these days. "The more I go about in these parts, the more I find that your worst enemy is fear. It eats into the vitals of the terror-stricken, as well as the terrorist. The latter fears something in his victim. It may be his different religion, or his riches, he fears. The second kind of fear is otherwise known as greed. If you search enough, you will find that greed is a variety of fear. But there has never been and will never be a man who is able to intimidate one who has cast out fear from his heart. Why can no one intimidate the fearless? You will find that God is always by the side of the fearless. Therefore, we should fear Him alone and seek His protection. All other fear will then by itself disappear. Till fearlessness is cultivated by the people, there will never be any peace in these parts for Hindus or for Muslims."

Speaking at the prayer gathering on November 19, which was held at Madhupur, Gandhi observed that the sister who had gone

to him to request him to hold a women's meeting had put before him three questions. The first question was that, in spite of all their efforts, they were unable to rescue some of the abducted women. He had told her that she should write to him about it and he would forward the letter to Shaheed Suhrawardy. He could even write to the chief minister directly. For, it was a matter which brooked no delay. Secondly, she said there were some women in villages who wanted to come away, but they wanted a military escort. He said he could never be a party to that. He had told the chief minister that he for one was not enamoured of the police and the military and that he could withdraw them at any time. The Hindus and the Muslims should be free to break each other's heads, if they wanted to. He would put up with that. But if they continued to look to the police and the military for help, they would remain slaves for ever. Those who preferred security to freedom had no right to live. He wanted women to become brave. To change one's religion under threat of force was no conversion but rather cowardice. A cowardly man or woman was a dead weight on any religion. Out of fear, they might become Muslims today, Christians tomorrow, and pass into a third religion the day after. That was not worthy of human beings. It was up to the men workers to tell the women that they would be their escort and they would protect them with their lives. If still the women were afraid to come away, there was no help for them. He had come to proclaim from the house-tops that the women had to become brave, or else die. The women should make use of the calamity that had befallen them to cast out the demon of fear. Lastly, the sister had asked as to how they could advise the refugees to go back to their homes. He would not ask them to go back under police or military protection. They had run away out of the fear of the Muslims. Therefore, it was the Muslims who had to come forward and reassure them that they would regard them as their own mothers and daughters and sisters, and protect them with their lives. Everybody must be entitled to retain his or her own religion without interference. All worshipped the same God, although under different names. "If I see my God in this tree and worship it, why should the Muslims object?" It was wrong for anyone to say that his God was superior to that of another's. God was one and the same for all. Hence his formula that from every village one good Hindu and one good Muslim should stand surety for the peace of

the village. Then and then alone would he ask the refugees to return, and the ministers had liked his suggestion.

On the day of his departure for Srirampur, Gandhi stated:

"I find myself in the midst of exaggeration and falsity. I am unable to discover the truth. There is terrible mutual distrust. Oldest friendships have snapped. Truth and ahimsa by which I swear, and which have to my knowledge sustained me for sixty years, seem to fail to show the attributes I have ascribed to them.

"To test them, or better, to test myself, I am going to a village called Srirampur, cutting myself away from those who have been with me all these years, and who have made life easy for me. I am taking Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose, as my Bengali teacher and interpreter, and Parasuram, who has been my most devoted, selfless and silent stenographer.

"The other workers whom I have brought with me will each distribute themselves in other villages of Noakhali to do the work of peace, if it is at all possible, between the two communities. They are, unfortunately, all non-Bengalis, except little Abha. They, therefore, will be accompanied by one Bengali worker each as teacher and interpreter, even like Professor Bose will be to me.

"Distribution work and selection work will be done by Shri Satish Chandra Dasgupta of the Khadi Pratisthan. My ideal is to live in a local Muslim League family, but I see that I must not wait for that happy day. I must meanwhile establish such contacts with the Muslims as I can in their own villages. My suggestion to the League ministers is that they should give me one honest, brave Muslim to accompany one equally honest and brave Hindu for each affected village. They should guarantee at the cost of their lives, if need be, the safety of the returning Hindu refugees. I am sorry to have to confess that without some such thing it seems to me difficult to induce them to return to their villages.

"From all the accounts received by me, life is not as yet smooth and safe for the minority community in the villages. They, therefore, prefer to live as exiles from their own homes, crops, plantations and surroundings, and live on inadequate and ill-balanced doles.

"Many friends from outside Bengal have written to me to allow them to come for peace work, but I have strongly dissuaded them from coming. I would love to let them come, if and when I see light through this impenetrable darkness.

"In the meantime, both Pyarelal and I have decided to suspend all other activities in the shape of correspondence, including the heavy work of *Harijan* and the allied weeklies. I have asked Shri Kishorlal, Shri Kakasaheb, Shri Vinoba and Shri Narhari Parikh to edit the weeklies jointly and severally. Pyarelal and I may, if our work permits, send stray contributions from our respective villages. Correspondence will be attended to from Sevagram.

"How long this suspense will last, is more than I can say. This much, however, I can. I do not propose to leave East Bengal, till I am satisfied that mutual trust has been established between the two communities and the two have resumed the even tenor of their life in their villages. Without this, there is neither Pakistan nor Hindustan—only slavery awaits India, torn asunder by mutual strife and engrossed in barbarity.

"No one need at present be disturbed about my low diet. On receipt of the following wire from Dr. Rajendra Prasad: 'Letter received. Have already wired quiet. There have been no incidents for a week now. Situation satisfactory. Most earnestly desire resumption of normal diet. Myself going Delhi 19th.', I resumed goat's milk from yesterday and propose to revert to normal diet, as early as the system permits. The future is in God's keeping."

On November 20, at 11-30 a.m., Gandhi broke up his camp at Kazirkhil to face the dark unknown. Many voices were husky and many eyes dim with tears, as the tiny country boat bearing him disappeared beyond the bridge, in the direction of Srirampur, a village about four miles to the west of Kazirkhil.

## *At Srirampur*

1946

IT TOOK two hours by boat to reach his solitary residence at Srirampur, situated in the midst of thick groves of stately arecanut and coconut palms. Round about was a grim scene of arson and devastation. Gandhi was out to conquer or die in an attempt to bring the Hindus and Muslims together.

Gandhi was carrying with him a bamboo staff to negotiate difficult bridges and swampy walks. Just after arrival, he kept his books in order, arranged things and made his own bed. Evening prayers were held in an open ground near his cottage and local Muslims and Hindus participated.

Speaking after the prayer at Srirampur on November 20, 1946 to an audience of about a thousand persons, Gandhi stated that he had never imagined that he would be able to come and settle down in a devastated village in Noakhali so soon. This had become possible through Satish Babu's efforts. He had come here alone, with two companions only. One was to act as his interpreter and teach him Bengali, while the other Parasuram, who was from Malabar, had been brought along, because he knew no Bengali and Hindustani also roughly, and so could not be set up in a village alone. For all practical purposes, he had thus come here alone. His companions had been left behind at Kazirkhil, and each of them was likewise to choose one village for himself. His idea was that each Hindu worker thus sent should be accompanied by a single Muslim worker, and both of them together would mix with local people and gradually create the atmosphere, when the refugees from here shed their fear and would be able to come back and live in peace and friendship once more. For a Muslim worker, he depended on Shaheed Saheb and Shamsuddin Saheb. But he could not afford to wait, until such a worker was available. And so he had come here, as soon as he found the opportunity. It was good that some Muslims present in

the meeting invited him to visit their homes. They had assured him that they also wanted the Hindus back in their village; but Hindus were not yet in the proper frame of mind to do so.

Fear is a thing which he disliked. Why should one be afraid of another man? Men should stand in fear of God alone, and then he can shed all other fears. Pyarelal had come to the meeting a short while ago. On his way, he met about 150 refugees who were going away from the village with their belongings. On inquiry, they had told him that they were afraid, when the military and the police would leave, there would be fresh trouble. Whilst, therefore, roads were safe, they took the opportunity of moving away to some place of safety. But the man who is possessed by fear will not find safety anywhere. What help can military or police give to such a man? To depend on military and police aid is to add to one's helplessness. He would, therefore, like the refugees to develop personal courage, so that they would consider it beneath their dignity to fly from the fancied danger, merely for the fear of losing one's life. Therefore, the better course for the intending refugees would be to derive personal courage from men like him who went to the affected villages, assuming, of course, that these had the requisite courage.

Whether such courage he could personally infuse in other men or not, he did not know. So long, he had lived amidst a number of companions. But now he had begun to say to himself, "Now is the time. If you want to know yourself, go forth alone." It was, therefore, that he had come practically alone like this to Srirampur. With unquenchable faith in God, he proposed to persevere, so as to succeed in disarming all opposition and inspiring confidence.

He would live here amidst Muslim villagers and form intimate acquaintance with each family, know their mind and help them to know his mind also. When they knew one another intimately, then would perhaps come the time, when the atmosphere would change and sweetness prevail in the relation between Hindus and Muslims, where sourness was prevailing today.

Since his arrival at Srirampur, Gandhi had several meetings with Shamsuddin Saheb and others and a conference with about thirty representatives of the Hindus and Muslims at Ramganj. As a result they were able to evolve a plan for the re-establishment of peace and communal harmony. The ministers gave him a solemn word of honour that they meant to implement it. The plan was put before

the public at a meeting held in Chandipur village on November 23. Gandhi speaking at the close of the meeting said:

"Here are the elected Muslims who are running the Government of the province. They have given you their word of honour. They would not be silent witnesses to the repetition of shameful deeds. My advice to the Hindus is to believe their word and give them a trial. But this does not mean that there would not be a single bad Muslim left in East Bengal. There are good and bad men amongst all communities. Dishonourable conduct could break any ministry or organization in the end. If you want real peace, there is no other way except to have mutual trust and confidence. Bihar, they say, has avenged Noakhali. But supposing the Muslims of East Bengal or the Muslims all over India make up their minds to avenge Bihar, where would India be? After all, if the worst came to the worst, you can only lose your lives. Only, you must do so as brave men and women. If Shamsuddin Saheb and his companions do not mean what they have said, you will know. I for one would not wish to be a living witness to such a tragedy."

On that day, November 23, the annual session of the Congress was held at Meerut. Gandhi could not be persuaded to attend the session, as he was busy in Noakhali. Referring to his achievement, President Kripalani said:

"Today, because there are communal riots and horizon appears a little dark, we get confused, and in that confusion, the best of us seem to lose their faith in non-violence. We think that nothing can be accomplished through non-violence. But I tell you the light has been lighted and it shall guide us, whether we wish it or not. It may not be today, or tomorrow. The prophets live and they die, but their doctrine often fructify after centuries. How many followers did Buddha have when he died? And how many had Mahomed? When Christ died, he had twelve disciples and all the twelve repudiated him, as we are today repudiating Gandhiji. Yet, Christianity lives; Christ lives. His scripture is the scripture of the world. Christ had conquered the world, even as Buddha conquered the world. Do not look to us. We may betray the master, not thrice but thirty times thrice, and yet the master and his doctrine will live. The doctrine is based upon eternal truth."

Seventy-seven-year old Gandhi was now working at the rate of eighteen hours a day. He rose at four in the morning and said his

prayers. Drinking eight ounces of warm water mixed with an ounce of honey and five grains of baking soda, Gandhi started reading or writing in the light of a kerosene lamp. Then he sat for his lesson in Bengali, which he never missed. At half past six, accompanied by his associates, he strolled on for about one hour along the narrow, dew soaked village roads. There was a slender wooden bridge over which he tried to walk unaided. He now increased his walking hours and the speed, preparing himself for his contemplated tour.

He returned back at nine and had massage for about one hour, followed by a sun bath and a hot-water bath. His first full meal at eleven consisted of eight ounces of goat's milk and boiled vegetables, about three tolas of thin *chapatis* and some fruits. Sometimes he took vegetables boiled with rice, as an alternative to *chapatis*.

While at meals, Gandhi attended to his correspondence. Often he slept for half an hour in the afternoon and woke up with clock-like precision. He took about twelve ounces of milk of a green coconut along with the kernel. He put mud pack on his abdomen for half an hour, part of his nature cure. He span at two, listening to the news in papers and talking to visitors. At half past three, he took his last meal for the day, before starting for the prayer at four. After prayer, he again went for a walk. Immediately on return, he plunged into work. He would retire at about half past eight and was soon fast asleep. He usually awoke at four, but sometimes even at two, when he drafted replies to letters or issued instructions.

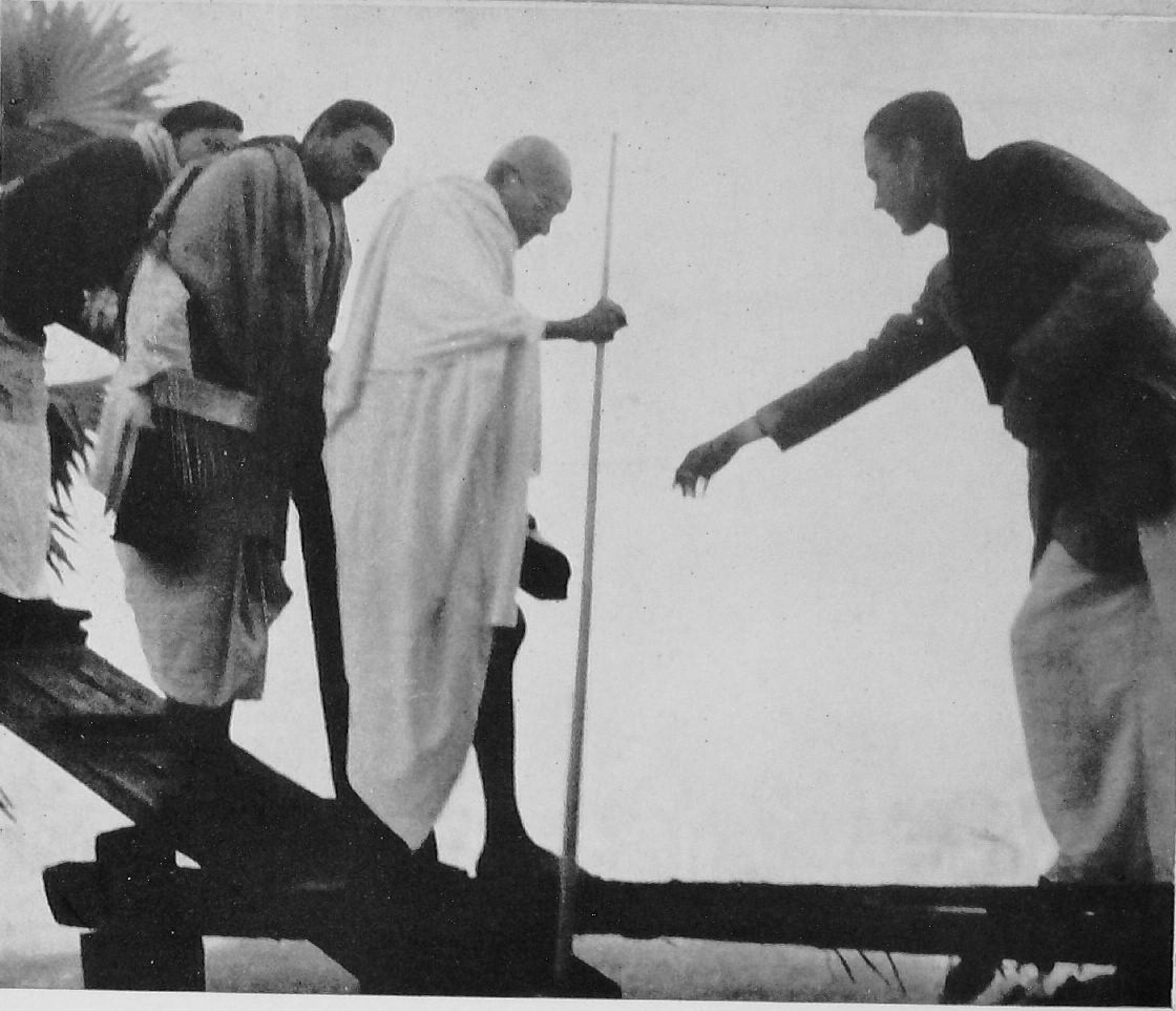
With Srirampur at one end, his peace plan was being executed around an area of twenty square miles. Fifteen workers, divided into ten stationary peace units, commenced working on the plan from November 24 in several rural areas of the Ramganj police station. The peace mission aimed at instilling bravery in the hearts of the Hindu minority and repentance in the hearts of miscreants.

Every day, Gandhi paid visits to the affected areas, either on foot or by boat. He visited the poor in their huts. He went round refugee camps and gave solace to the sufferers. His ambition was "to wipe every tear from every eye".

On November 28, Gandhi related the story of how the ashram prayer had taken its present shape. When he came to India in 1915, Tagore urged upon him through Andrews to stay at Santiniketan along with the inmates of the Phoenix settlement. These friends had created a sort of South African group at the place. The prayer which

Photograph: B. K. Sinha

Gandhi, aged 77, Noakhali, November 1946



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Crossing a slender wooden bridge, Noakhali, November 1946

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Visit to the affected area of Ramganj on foot and by boat, November 1946

*Photograph : D. G. Tendulkar*

Gandhi giving solace to the

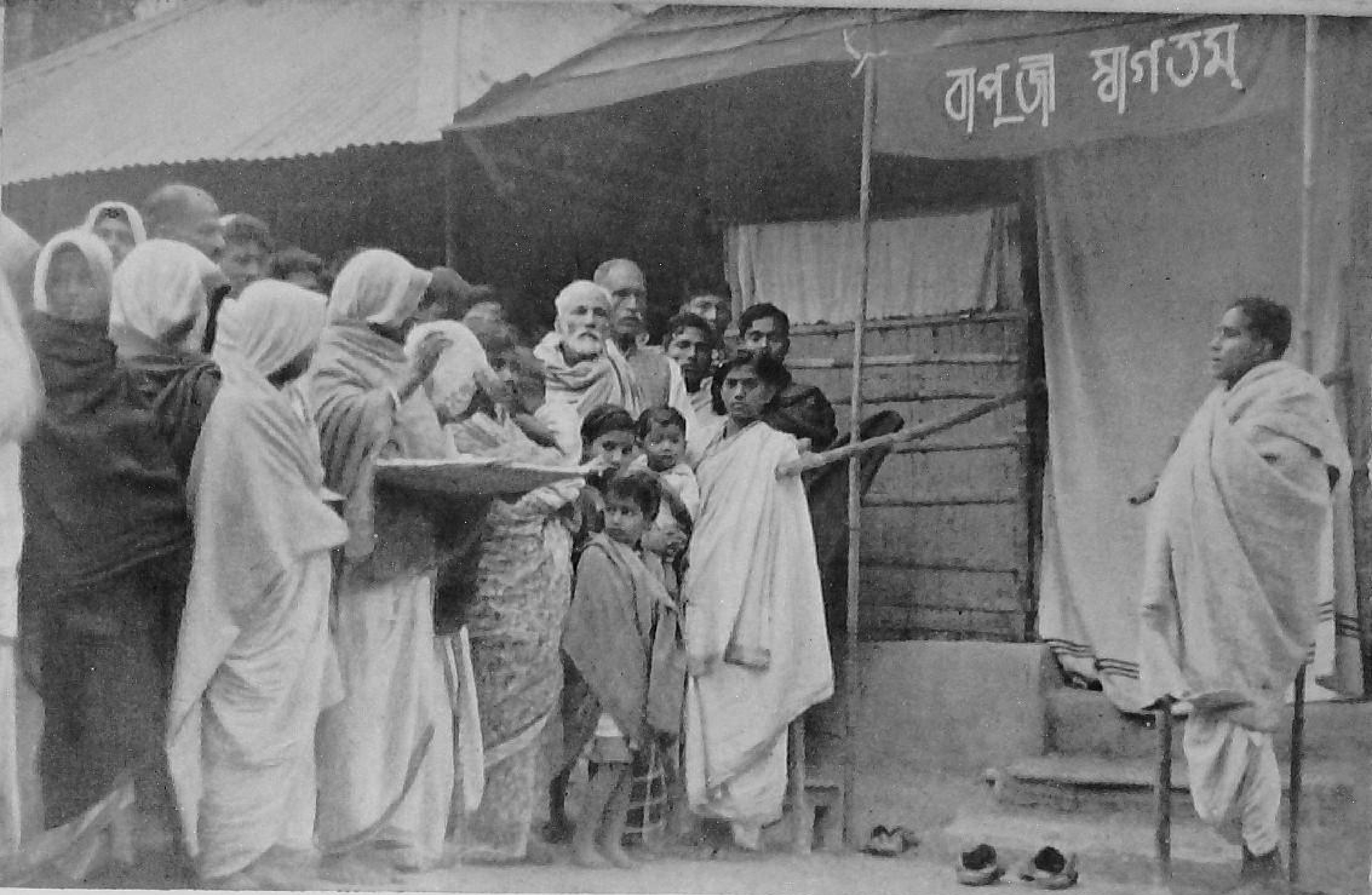
Photograph : B. K. Sinha

sufferers of Noakhali, December 1946

A village school of Gandhi's conception

*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

for the distressed children of Noakhali



*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

Villagers' welcome to Gandhi, Noakhali, December 1946

was observed at that early time by the small group practically continued to this day, so far as the Sanskrit part was concerned.

While on Harijan tour in Travancore, he added the first verse of the *Ishopanishad* to it, as, in his opinion, it contained the cream of the Hindu spiritual thought. Later on, Raihana Tyabji, the daughter of Abbas Tyabji, proposed the incorporation of a passage from the Koran Shareef, and this was done. Lastly, on Kasturba's death at Aga Khan palace, Dr. Gilder had recited a passage from the Zoroastrian scripture. Since then, that prayer had been a part of ashram prayer. In addition, there was a *bhajan* in an Indian language, or an English hymn and Ramdhun.

The prayer which had thus taken shape could on no account be considered as belonging to any single community or religion. It was of universal appeal; and no one, whatever his denomination might be, should have hesitation in sharing it.

Slowly, stricken Hindus at Srirampur began to show signs of life. Temple bells began to sound and people participated in Ramdhun more freely. Within a fortnight, villagers began to pour in from far and near to attend the prayer meetings. One day a group of people from the neighbouring villages arrived, singing the *namasankirtan* to the accompaniment of a *khol* and cymbals. When the Ramdhun was being sung, they kept time by means of the *khol*. Gandhi was happy to see the dead souls returning to life.

But still the atmosphere was charged with fear and suspicion. In the course of a letter to a colleague, Gandhi wrote:

"My present mission is the most complicated and difficult one of my life. I can sing with cent per cent truth: 'The night is dark and I am far from home, lead Thou me on.'

"I never experienced such darkness in my life before. The night seems to be pretty long. The only consolation is that I feel neither baffled, nor disappointed. I am prepared for any eventuality. 'Do or Die' has to be put to test. 'Do' here means Hindus and Muslims should learn to live together in peace and amity. Else, I should die in the attempt. It is really a difficult task. God's will be done."

In a letter to ailing Pyarelal he wrote: "Now don't rush back to this village. Those who go to villages have to go there with a determination to live and die there. If they must fall ill, they have to get well there or die there. Then alone could the going would have any meaning. In practice, this means that they must be content

with home remedies, or the therapy of nature's five elements. Dr. Sushila has her own village to look to. Her services are not at present meant for the members of our party. They are pre-mortgaged to the village folk of East Bengal. It won't do to live in the villages like a Frankenstein. They must learn to live and move cautiously like the proverbial she elephant. Then alone would they be qualified to live there. To live in the villages of Bengal calls for a special talent. We have all to cultivate that. You and I have to pass that test."

"Come to me when you are well and I shall further explain the meaning of 'Do or Die'," wrote Gandhi in his final note to Pyarelal. Accordingly, Pyarelal went to Srirampur in December. Pyarelal met him some way up the road to Rajbari, his residence. Accompanied by Nirmal Babu, Gandhi was having his morning walk. He had to cross a small dry *khal*, spanned by a single-log bridge, without any side support. Gandhi insisted on performing the feat unaided. Nirmal Babu stood close by and his caution was vindicated when, unable at seventy-seven to emulate the agility of the 'teens', Gandhi saved himself from falling down by quickly taking support of Nirmal Babu's shoulder. That day, in a heart-to-heart talk, Gandhi revealed his mind. He said that as soon as he had recouped sufficiently and the water in the rice fields dried up, he proposed to walk from village to village and knock at every door to deliver his message of fearlessness. He would not return to the village from which he started. Thus he would share the life of the villager.

In a talk with Professor Amiya Chakravarty, he said:

"For me, if this thing is pulled through, it will be the crowning act of my life. I had to come down to the soil and to the people of East Bengal. The first person to whom I told this was Jawaharlal. Without a moment's hesitation, he said: 'Yes, your place is there. Although we need you so much here, we need you more in Noakhali.' I asked him, 'When?' 'As soon as you feel like it,' he replied. In two days, I started."

On December 2, Gandhi gave an interview to the press reporters at Srirampur: "The question of exchange of population is unthinkable and impracticable. This question never crossed my mind. In every province, everyone is an Indian, be he a Hindu, a Muslim or of any other faith. It would not be otherwise, even if Pakistan came in full. For me, any such thing will spell bankruptcy of Indian wisdom or statesmanship or both. The logical consequence of any such

step is too dreadful to contemplate. Is it not that India should be artificially divided into so many religious zones?"

When asked, if in view of the unsettled situation, it was not better to adopt a migration policy, he replied: "I see nothing to warrant such a policy. It is one of despair and, therefore, to be adopted in rare cases, as a last resort."

The next question was: "You said the other day, that there is no limit to your stay in East Bengal. Do you think by confining yourself at Srirampur, you will be able to send your message of peace to other villages of Noakhali?"

Gandhi replied: "Of course, I am not burying myself long in Srirampur. I am not idle here. I am seeing people of the surrounding villages and others. I am studying things and regaining lost physical strength, meanwhile. The idea ultimately is to go on foot, when possible and necessary, from village to village, and induce evacuees to return. This I can only do with effect, when I have seen things myself. And it is quite clear to me that my mere word carries very little weight. Distrust has gone too deep for exhortation."

Gandhi was next asked as to why he found himself in darkness. He explained:

"I am afraid the report is substantial. Outside circumstances have never overwhelmed me. The reason for present darkness lies within me. I find that my ahimsa does not seem to answer in the matter of Hindu-Muslim relations. This struck me forcibly, when I came to learn of the events in Noakhali.

"The reported forcible conversions and the distress of the Bengali sisters touched me deeply. I could do nothing through pen or speech. I argued to myself that I must be on the scene of action and test the soundness of the doctrine which has sustained me and has made life worth living.

"Was it the weapon of the weak, as it was often held by my critics, or was it truly the weapon of the strong? This question arose in me when I had no ready-made solution for the distemper, of which Noakhali was such a glaring symptom.

"And so setting aside all my activities, I hastened to Noakhali to find out where I stood. I know positively that ahimsa is the perfect instrument. If it did not answer in my hands, the imperfection was in me. My technique was at fault. I could not discover the error from a distance. Hence I came here trying to make the discovery.

I must, therefore, own myself in darkness, till I see light. God only knows when it will come. More I cannot say."

A reporter asked: "Do you not think that the Bengal ministers may regard your very presence in Noakhali as an oppression and that whatever they do out of their own sense of justice towards the rehabilitation of the refugees may be regarded by the outside world as being done under the pressure of your presence?"

Gandhi replied: "I claim that I have come as much as a friend of the Muslims as of the Hindus in this part of the world. You may recall my visit to Champaran in the very early period of my return to the motherland. I was even served with a notice to quit. The conviction against me was cancelled on the orders of the then Viceroy and the magistrate was instructed to permit and even help in my unofficial inquiry."

A worker asked if there was any change of mentality on the part of the authorities. He replied: "In the present plan of Government, I confess, through bitter experience, that there is no sign of change of heart, but certainly there has been a change of plan."

The worker remarked that it was painful to see how listless the Hindus had become. "It is no prerogative of the Hindus," Gandhi retorted. "Listlessness is common to us all. Even if I am the only one, I shall fight this listlessness that has come over the Hindus of East Bengal. I have not come here to do a good turn to this community or that, but I have come to do a good turn to myself. Nonviolence is not meant to be practised by the individual only. It can be and has to be practised by the society as a whole. I have come to test that for myself in Noakhali."

The worker proceeded: "If the League leaders were to take the Noakhali situation as seriously as you and Jawaharlal took Bihar, order will be restored in a day." Gandhi stated that to make such comparisons was to degrade oneself. What was called for was self-introspection and more self-introspection. "I have come here not only to speak to the Muslims, but to the Hindus as well. Why are they such cowards? The Harijans and Namashudras have been relatively better, so far as courage and physical prowess is concerned. They are brave. But the other Hindus must shed utterly the caste distinctions. If this calamity would open the eyes of the Hindus and result in eradicating untouchability, root and branch, it will have served a good purpose."

Narrating his experiences in India, he recalled how during the Champaran satyagraha, in Rajendra Babu's absence, he could only sit in his outhouse and how his servant would not let him bathe at the well. Things had improved, but much remained to be done.

Talking of the forced conversions in Noakhali, the interviewer remarked that unless those who had been converted were all brought back to the Hindu fold quickly, the cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims might become permanent. Gandhi admitted the force of the argument. "Many had returned," he remarked. "But all must be. I have, of course, always believed in the principle of religious tolerance. But I have even gone further. I have advanced from tolerance to equal respect for all religions. All religions are branches of the same mighty tree, but I must not change over from one branch to another for the sake of expediency. By doing so, I cut the very branch on which I am sitting. Therefore, I always feel the change-over from one religion to another very keenly, unless it is a case of spontaneous urge, a result of the inner growth. Such conversions by their very nature cannot be on a mass scale and never to save one's life or property or for temporal gain."

He narrated his meeting with a South Indian bishop, who was a Harijan converted to Christianity and also retained all his original weakness in spite of the change of religion. He had told Andrews that to his mind he was no bishop at all.

"There is no end to the monstrosities that have been committed here, and that too in the name of religion. It is enough to fill one with blank despair," remarked the worker.

"I have met human monsters from my early youth," Gandhi replied. "I have found that even they are not beyond redemption, if we know how to touch the right chord in their soul."

"The whole thing is so ghastly," he added. "You do not need to exaggerate it. I have told the authorities that I do not care for the numbers. Has a single case of abduction, rape, forcible marriage, or forcible conversion occurred? If so, it is enough for me. They have admitted that such things have happened."

"What about the rescue of the abducted women?" was the next question. It was said that as soon as information was received about such cases and the rescue party with the military police set out on their assignment, the miscreants received intimation and removed the victim to some other place.

Gandhi replied: "I have told our people not to depend on the military and the police help. You have to uphold democracy, and the democracy and dependence on the military and the police are incompatible. You cannot say it is good in one place and bad in another. The military help will degrade you. In a democracy, if the electorate sets up a hooligan as the head of the Government, they then lie in the bed they have made, or else convert the electorate through satyagraha, if necessary. That is democracy. Whether it is Bihar and Bengal, people have to be brave and start on their legs. I want every one to die at his post like a brave man, not to leave his home or his village."

Another interviewer asked Gandhi why Nehru went to Bihar and took such an active part in putting down disturbances there, while he did nothing for Bengal. If the Interim Government could not interfere in one province because of provincial autonomy, how could it do so in another? Gandhi explained that they must not forget that besides being the Vice-President of the Interim Government, Nehru was the first servant of the Congress. As the Vice-President of the Central Cabinet, he must act within the four corners of the constitution. It did not permit interference with the provincial autonomy. But in Bihar, Jawaharlal and Rajendra Babu had a standing and responsibility as Congressmen.

One of the interviewers remarked that Bengal was being used as a pawn on the political chess-board. "No," said Gandhi. "Bengal is in the forefront today, because Bengal is Bengal. It is Bengal that produced Tagore and Bankim Chandra. It was here that the heroes of the Chittagong Armoury Raid were born, however misguided their action might have been in my eyes. You must understand it. If Bengal plays the game, it will solve all India's problem. That is why I have made myself a Bengali. Why should there be cowardice in the Bengal of such men?"

"Yes," remarked the interviewer. "When I see these desecrated places of worship, I ask, why did not every man, woman and child of the house die there, before those places were touched?"

"If they had done that," said Gandhi, "you would not have required any other help. Today Noakhali is bereft of its leading men. They refused to take the risk and have left their hearths and homes. Poor Monoranjan Babu is in a fix. Whom is he to put on the peace committees? I have told him that the common man must rise to fill

the vacuum. There is no such thing as a vacuum in nature. Nature abhors it. Let him write to them, I have told him. If they come back, well and good. Otherwise, the common man must come forward. It is his day."

"Mahatmaji, tell us in one word," said another worker, "whether is it war or peace? Peace committees or war committees?"

"Peace committees," replied Gandhi. "War results, when peace fails. Our effort must always be directed towards peace. But it must be peace with honour and with a fair security for life and property. On these two conditions alone will the refugees return. Of course, if they develop enough courage, they will return without any safeguard. Today I have suggested one Hindu and one Muslim standing surety for each village. If the people have requisite courage, they would depend on none but God and their own strength of spirit for their defence. If they did that, all goondas in Noakhali will feel the change in the atmosphere and behave decently. I know what I am saying. I come from Kathiawad, a province notorious for bandits. I know that they are not beyond redemption. Nor do I believe that goondas are responsible for all that has happened."

A suggestion was made as to why they should not have only the Muslims on the peace committees, as the Hindu had played no part in breaking the peace.

"No," said Gandhi. "The Hindus must be there to play their part, else the peace committees will be a farce."

"Was it not possible to control Bihar with non-violence?" was the last question.

"Yes," affirmed Gandhi. "But Bihar has been having a lesson in the organized violence since 1942 and before. Our weakness for the goondas rose to the highest in 1942. I know the merits of '42. The people were not cowed down. But all the same, I cannot shut my eyes to our mistakes. We have to learn to do better."

On December 15, he was interviewed by two Congressmen from Assam on behalf of Mr. Bardoloi, Chief Minister of Assam. Asked for guidance in regard to "grouping", Gandhi replied:

"I do not need a single minute to come to a decision, for on this I have a mind. I am a Congressman to the very marrow, as I am mainly the framer of the constitution of the Congress, as it stands today. I have told Bardoloi that if there is no clear guidance from the Congress committee, Assam should not go into the sections. It

should lodge its protest and retire from the constituent assembly. It will be a kind of satyagraha against the Congress for the good of the Congress.

"Rightly or wrongly, the Congress has come to the decision that it will stand by the judgement of the Federal Court. The dice are heavily loaded. The decision of the Federal Court will go against the Congress interpretation of 'grouping', as far as I can make out, for the simple reason that the cabinet has got legal advice which upholds their decision.

"The Federal Court is the creation of the British. It is a packed court. But to be consistent, the Congress must abide by its decision whatever it may be. If Assam keeps quiet, it is finished. No one can force Assam to do what it does not want to do. It is autonomous to a large extent today.

"It must become fully independent and autonomous. Whether you have that courage, grit and the gumption, I do not know. You alone can say that. But if you can make that declaration, it will be a fine thing. As soon as the time comes for constituent assembly to go into sections, you will say, 'Gentlemen, Assam retires'. For the independence of India, it is the only condition. Each unit must be able to decide and to act for itself. I am hoping that in this, Assam will lead the way.

"I have the same advice for the Sikhs. But your position is much happier than that of the Sikhs. You are a whole province. They are a community inside a province. But I feel every individual has the right to act for himself, just as I have."

Question: "But we are told that the framing of the constitution for the whole of India cannot be held up for the sake of Assam. It cannot be allowed to block the way."

Gandhi: "There is no need to do that. That is why I say that I am in utter darkness. Why are not these simple truths evident to all after so many years? If Assam retires, it does not block, but leads the way to India's independence."

Question: "The British Government have declared that the constitution framed by the constituent assembly cannot be imposed on unwilling units. And so, if some parts do not accept it, the British Parliament will not accept it."

Gandhi: "Who is the British Government? If we think independence is going to descend on our heads from England or somewhere,

we are greatly mistaken. It will not be independence. We will be crushed to atoms. We are fluctuating between independence and helpless dependence. The Cabinet Mission's plan lies in between.

"If we act rightly, there will be the full blown flower of independence. If we react wrongly, the blossom will wither away. Mind you, the League standpoint is quite correct. If they stand out, the constituent assembly cannot impose its constitution on an unwilling party. The British Government have no say in the matter, one way or the other.

"The British cannot interfere with the working of the constituent assembly. Supposing the vast majority, including the Muslims and others form a constitution, you can defy the British Parliament, if it seeks to interfere. Power is in your own hands. Some such thing happened in Ireland only recently. And De Valera is no non-violent fighter. The position of India is far better than that of Ireland. If we have not the penetration, we will lose the advantage we have, as it is apparently being lost today.

"If Assam takes care of itself, the rest of India will be able to look after itself. What have you got to do with the constitution of the Union Government? You should form your own constitution. That is enough. You have the basis of a constitution all right even now.

"I have never despised the constitution of 1935. It is based on provincial autonomy. It has the capacity for the fullest growth, provided the people are worth it. The hill people are with you. Many Muslims are also with you. The remainder can be too, if you act on the square.

"You will have to forget petty jealousies and rivalries, and overcome your weaknesses. Assam has many weaknesses, as it has much strength, for I know my Assam."

"With your blessings, we can even go outside the Congress and fight," they interposed.

Gandhi said that in 1939, when there was the question of giving up the ministry, Subhas Babu opposed it, as he thought Assam's was a special case. "I told Bardoloi that there was much in what Subhas Babu had said and, although I was the author of that scheme of boycott, I said Assam should not come out, if it did not feel like it. But Assam did come out. It was wrong."

Assam Congressmen complained that Azad had then said that exception could not be made in the case of Assam.

Gandhi replied: "Here there is no question of exception. People would have said, 'Assam rebelled and that civilly'. But we have that slavish mentality. We look to the Congress and then we feel that if we do not follow it slavishly, something will go wrong with it. I have said that not only a province but even an individual can rebel against the Congress and, by doing so, save it, assuming that he is in the right. I have done so myself. The Congress has not attained the present stature without much travail.

"I have given you all this time to steel your hearts, to give you courage. If you don't act correctly and now, Assam will be finished. Tell Bardoloi, I don't feel the least uneasiness. My mind is made up. Assam must not lose its soul. It must uphold it against the whole world. Else, I will say that Assam had only manikins and no men. It is an impertinent suggestion that Bengal should dominate Assam in any way."

Asked if they could tell the people that they had rebelled against the Congress with his blessings, Gandhi said: "Talk of God's blessings. They are much richer. Tell the people even if Gandhi tries to dissuade us, we won't listen."

With regard to the proposed constituent assembly, Gandhi sent the following note to the Congress Working Committee:

"I am quite clear that if there is a boycott by the Muslim League of the constituent assembly, it should not meet under the Cabinet Mission's statement of the 16th May. It clearly contemplates the co-operation of the two major parties, namely, the Congress and the Muslim League. Therefore, if one of them proclaims a boycott, the constituent assembly cannot meet with propriety under that paper. If the Government convene the constituent assembly, inspite of the boycott, they can legitimately do so under some other statement, which they can draw up in consultation with the Congress. It should never be forgotten that however powerful the Congress has become, the constituent assembly, as contemplated today, can only meet by action of the British Government.

"Even if the constituent assembly meets inspite of the boycott, but with the willing co-operation of the British Government, it will be under the visible or the invisible protection of the British forces, whether Indian or European. In my opinion, we shall never reach a satisfactory constitution under these circumstances. Whether we own it or not, our weakness will be felt by the whole world.

"It may be said that not to meet as a constituent assembly under these circumstances will amount to a surrender to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah or the Muslim League. I do not mind the charge because the waiver will not be an act of weakness, it will be an act of the Congress strength because it would be due to the logic of facts.

"If we have attained a certain degree of status and strength to warrant us in convening our own constituent assembly, irrespective of the British Government, it will be a proper thing. We will have then to seek the co-operation of the Muslim League and all parties, including the princes, and the constituent assembly can meet at a favourable place, even if some do not join. Thus it may be the only Congress provinces plus princes who may care to join. I think this would be dignified and wholly consistent with facts."

By December 21, Gandhi completed his one month's stay at Srirampur. On that day, in his prayer discourse, he began by saying that he held very strong views on the question of charity. It was wrong both to accept, as well as to offer anyone a free gift. In our land irreligion often masqueraded in the name of religion. India was said to have a contingent of fifty-six lakhs of religious mendicants, not many of whom could be considered worthy in any sense. Even the hateful custom of untouchability had been given the sanction of religion in this land of sorrow.

The problem of relief and rehabilitation, he stated, had become a serious one. People from all over India were eager to help the afflicted inhabitants of Noakhali with money or gifts of all kinds, and there was a chance that the latter might slip into a mentality of willing dependence on public charity. This had to be combated as much as the self-complascence of those who might feel they were acquiring religious merit through charitable gifts.

Gandhi further added that the people had gathered in the refugee camps for no fault of theirs. Their homes had been burnt and they were without shelter; others had been robbed of all their belongings, although their cottages might still be standing, while a third group had deserted their homes mainly from a feeling of insecurity. It should be the object of the Government to deal with each case on its own merits and help the people to return home with a feeling of security.

Adequate protection had to be given and an atmosphere created where the people might once more pursue their life's work in peace.

So long as the conditions were not forthcoming, arrangements for relief had to continue.

But the case of public charitable institutions stood on an entirely different footing. Gandhi held it was wrong for any man to live on public doles. The charitable institutions now working here should plainly tell the people that everyone should deem it a dishonour to eat a single meal without honest labour. If we could shed aversion to labour and adopt ourselves to unexpected changes of fortune, we would go a long way towards the acquisition of fearlessness and thus towards an upliftment of our national character.

He would venture to tell refugees that whether they were poor or rich, they should say to the authorities that they would consider it below human dignity to accept doles from the Government. The poor or the rich had nothing left to them. Therefore, they were in need of food, clothing, shelter and medical aid. They had a claim upon the state for providing these vital necessities of life. But they would be robbing society, if they accepted this aid without each healthy man, woman, boy or girl, labouring to the extent of his or her ability and, therefore, he would like the Government to provide such useful work for society which they were capable of doing.

On Monday, December 23, he first referred to certain personal letters addressed to him, as well as a number of articles or comments published in newspapers in which the opinion had been expressed that his continued presence in Noakhali was acting as a deterrent to the restoration of cordial relation between the Hindus and the Muslims, for his intention was to bring discredit upon the League ministry in Bengal.

Two days ago, he had tried to refute the rumour that a satyagraha movement of an extensive character was secretly planned by him in Noakhali. He had already stated that nothing could be done by him in secret. If recourse was taken to secrecy and falsehood, satyagraha would degenerate into *duragraha*.

Now he found it necessary to answer the second charge levelled against him to which reference had already been made. He would like to proclaim that he had come to Bengal solely with the object of establishing heart unity between the two communities, who had become estranged from one another. When that object was satisfactorily achieved, there would no longer be any necessity for him to prolong his stay in Bengal.

His intention could never be to embarrass the League Government in Bengal. On the other hand, his relations with the ministry, as well as with the officials, had been very cordial and he had been able to gather the impression that all of them looked with favour upon his present peace mission. He had discovered no indication yet of his presence causing embarrassment to anyone. It was open to Government to ask the magistrate and the superintendent of police to convince him of his error, if they were themselves convinced. As yet, they had said not a word to such effect. If he felt convinced of any error on his part, he would leave.

Gandhi said that he had enough work to do elsewhere, which demanded his attention. There was Uruli Kanchan, seat of his nature cure experiments, and Sevagram, and there was Delhi again, where he might be of some service. He would love to spare troubles to the leaders, who had to come to this out-of-the-way place, in order to consult him. But personally, he felt convinced that the work undertaken by him here was of the greatest importance for all India. If he succeeded in his present mission, it was bound to have a profound influence on the future of India, and, if he might be permitted to say so, even on the future peace of the world, for it was to be a test of faith in non-violence.

A copy of the Muslim League report on the Bihar atrocities had been sent to him. He had gone through it with care and he had felt that it bristled with overstatements. Nevertheless, he was making inquiries on the basis of that report. It was certainly true that much that had happened in Bihar was brutal enough and deserved the severest condemnation. The overstatement blurred the gruesomeness of the reality. He was assured that calm had been restored. It was on that assurance that normal diet was resumed by him.

The reason why he had not gone to Bihar was that he could exercise his personal influence effectively even from a distance. But if there were any reason to suspect that things still continued in Bihar in the manner described in the report and that he had been misled by false assurance of his friends, then his place would surely be in Bihar and he might even confess that this might imply that the life in the present body was now over, and that there was no longer any room for him in the land of the living.

But he could not help uttering a word of warning that the leaders of public opinion had a serious responsibility. Their word would be

believed by the credulous public, and they all knew the tragic consequences. This he said irrespective of whether the leaders belonged to the Congress or the Muslim League.

The next day, Gandhi began his prayer speech by saying that the complaints had been pouring in that the people were unable to shed their fear, because the persons known to be guilty were now freely moving about. He said that although this might be true, his advice to them would still be to take courage in their hands and return to their homes. When several persons had complained that the amounts offered by the Government for rebuilding was inadequate for the erection of any kind of shelter, he felt sure that the Government, which was determined on repatriation would extend their aid to the necessary extent.

What he would personally prefer was that the refugees should be resourceful enough to tide over the present difficulties. He would honour a man who begged nothing for himself, nor depended on the outsider's aid for protection. If any one depended on him for that purpose, he was depending on a broken reed.

The only effective protection came from reliance upon internal strength, on God. Everyone should realize the secret that oppression thrived only when the oppressed submitted to it. If they shed fear from their hearts, nobody would or could oppress them.

Readings from the Bible formed a special feature of his prayer meeting on December 25, the birthday of Jesus Christ. Addressing the audience, Gandhi said that he had begun to believe in a toleration which he would call the equality of all religions. He added that Jesus Christ might be looked upon as belonging to Christians only, but he really did not belong to any community, inasmuch as the lessons that Jesus Christ gave belonged to the whole world.

The Friends' Service Unit had sent him some christmas presents—cigarettes, playing cards, soaps etc. Gandhi was in a playful mood. He spread all the gifts on a mat, and then started distributing them. The packet of cigarettes he kept for Jawaharlal, who was expected to visit him on the 27th.

In the course of his prayer speech the next day, Gandhi said that the task which he had undertaken in Bengal was most serious. Here a community which was friendly to him previously had now looked upon him as its enemy. He was out to prove that he was a real friend of the Muslims. So he had chosen for his greatest experiment

a place where the Muslims were in majority. For the fulfilment of his mission, it would suffice if he toured the country-side alone, and the presence of the workers from outside soliciting his advice and directions raised fresh problems for him, instead of assisting him to solve the already complicated task he had undertaken. Much of the misunderstanding could be removed, if those really keen on serving the people of Noakhali would directly approach the ministers with their plan of work and obtain not only their written permission to carry on their work, but also their approval of the plan.

To some people, who had sent him letters and telegrams offering to come to Noakhali for service, Gandhi had replied that they could serve the cause by carrying on constructive work around their own places. To those who sought directions as to how best to serve in Noakhali, Gandhi said that he himself was groping in darkness, and therefore, a blind man could not be the best guide.

This speech was provoked by the fact that when he asked some people offering to serve in Noakhali whether they would continue to serve if necessary for a lifetime even after he had left, they were reluctant to commit themselves. This reluctance led him to believe that the people were anxious to come and to serve in a manner which would attract his attention, and that such people were not keen on service for the sake of service.

In his prayer address on December 27, Gandhi said that a friend had been telling him that his reference to the "darkness" surrounding him was very confusing to many. The friend thought that the people at distance saw light shimmering through his plan, and there was sufficient proof that the confidence was slowly returning in that affected area.

Gandhi remarked he would tell this friend and others who thought like him that they had misunderstood him to some extent. The darkness in which he was now surrounded was of such a character that the like of which had never faced him before. It was indeed now a vital test that his non-violence was passing through. He would not be able to say that he had come out successful, until the object was reached.

It was true that the night was the darkest before the dawn. He himself felt that, and although the friends at distance could see the glimpses of breaking dawn, he himself felt that he was surrounded in complete darkness.

Gandhi said that, many years ago, a friend of his used to carry Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* constantly in his pocket. Although he did not know Sanskrit, yet the friend would often come to him to consult about the meaning of some of the *sutras*. In one of the *sutras*, it was stated that when ahimsa had been fully established, it would completely liquidate the forces of enmity and evil in the neighbourhood. He felt that the stage had not been reached in the neighbourhood about him and this led him to infer that his ahimsa had not yet succeeded in the present test.

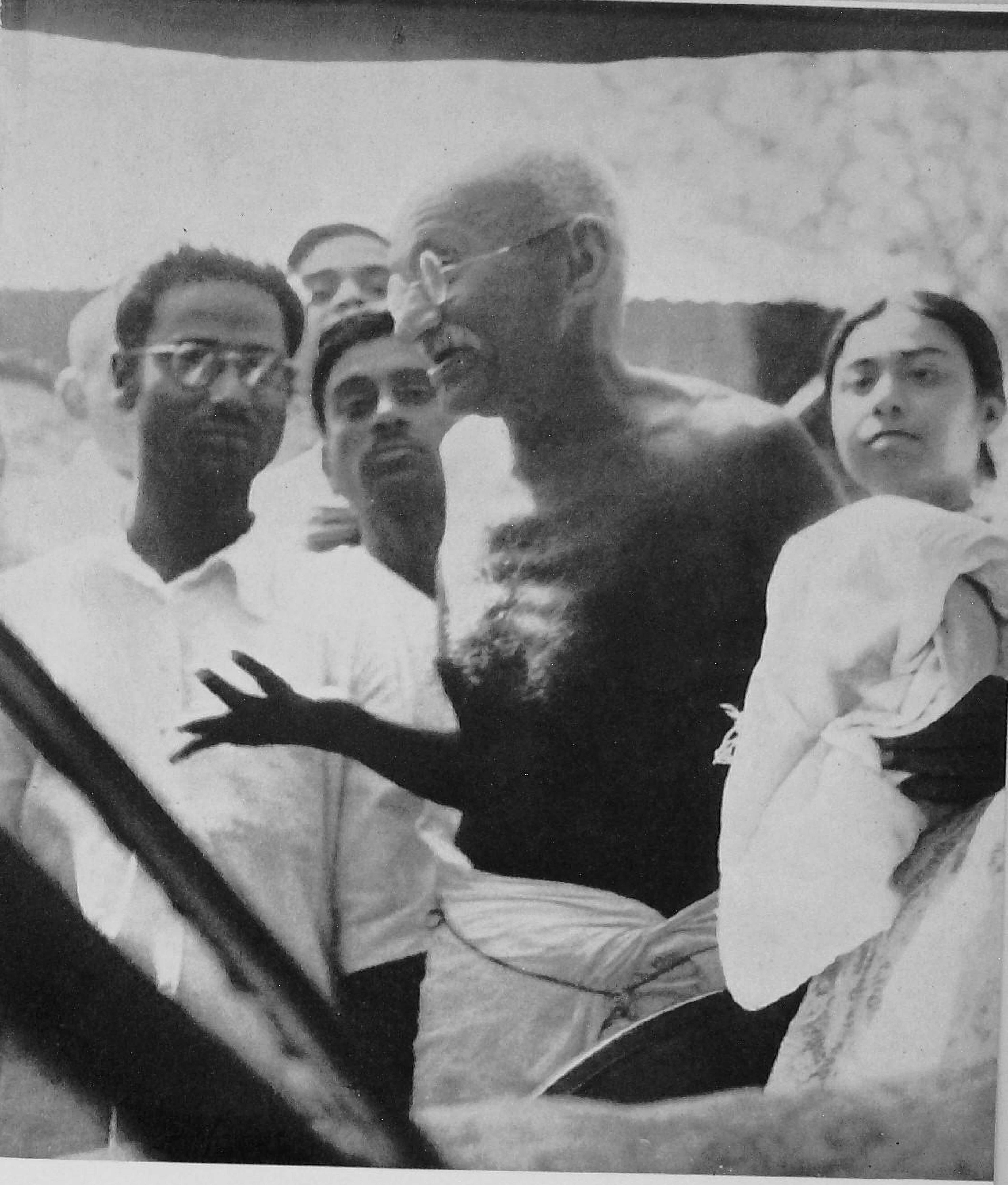
That was the reason why he was saying that there was still darkness all round him.

Gandhi said that his plan was to proceed with the least number of companions on his march, and that he would prefer to stay in the houses of Muslim friends. He had now reduced his needs, and these could be met even by the poorest villagers. He would prefer to go absolutely unprotected, if it was to prove that in his heart he had nothing but love and friendship for the Muslims.

During his prayer discourse on December 31, Gandhi made a brief reference to the visit of Pandit Nehru and President Kripalani. He said that these leaders had come to seek advice on constitutional affairs. The basis of their talks was Hindu-Muslim unity. The leaders did not come for any proposals. "They had read about my work for Hindu-Muslim unity in the newspapers, but they wanted to come and see personally how I was working. They wanted to avoid what had happened in Noakhali happening all over India and, therefore, they wanted help and advice how to prevent the quarrels among the Hindus and the Muslims in regard to the constituent assembly. The Congress was never against any community. The leaders have not taken any proposals, but they have taken my written suggestion about the approaching constitutional problems in terms of unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. With these suggestions, they will make decisions in the Working Committee."

Gandhi's written instructions were as follows:

"During its unbroken career of sixty years, the Congress has been invariably and progressively representative of all the communities, Hindus, Muslims and others. It has also been progressively representative of the masses. That it has always had a number of hypocrites is but an ode to these two among its many virtues. If those who represent these two virtues are found to be in a hopeless minority, they

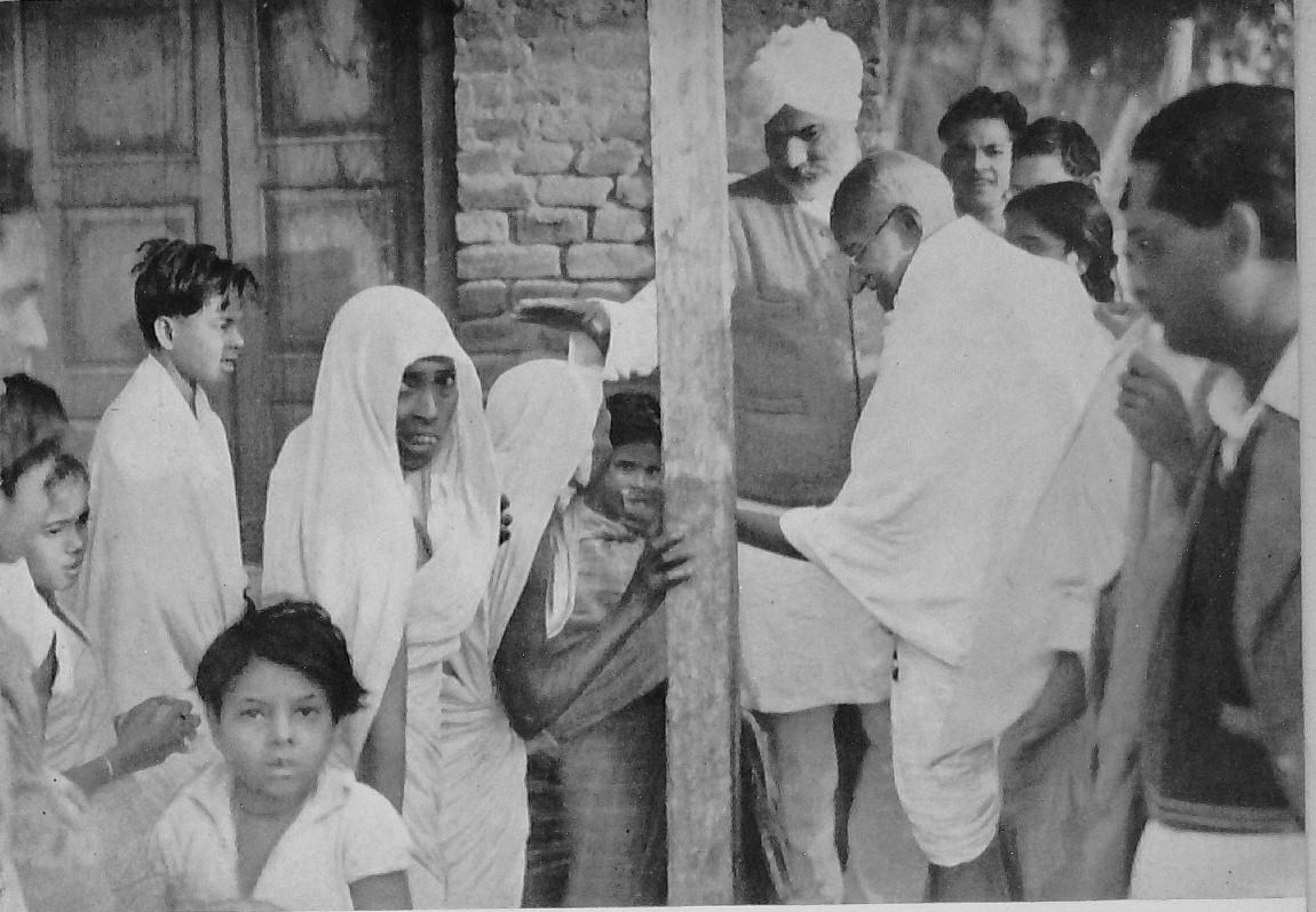


*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Talking to the villagers, Noakhali, December 1946

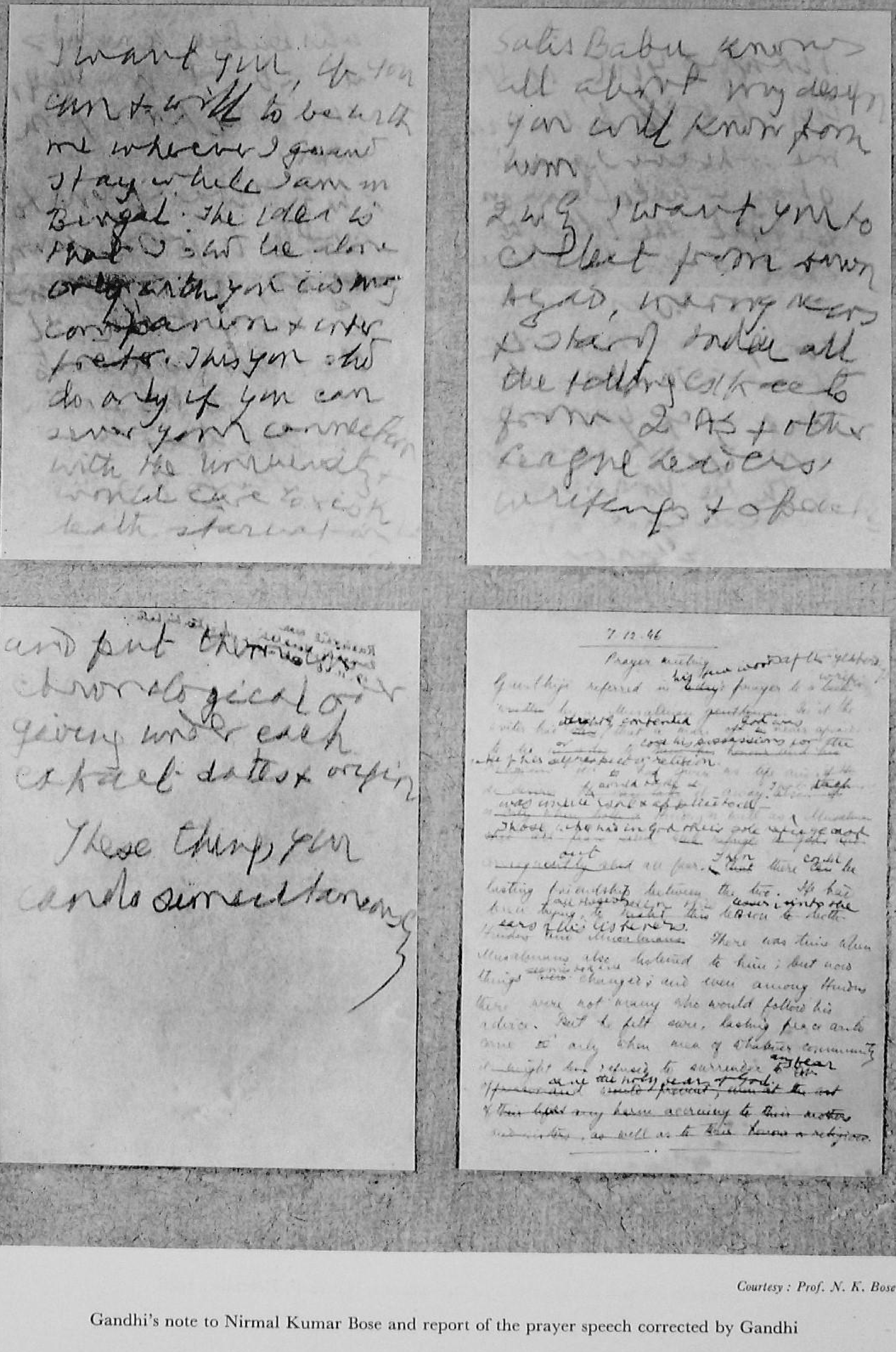
*Photograph : K. Natarajan*

Gandhi greeting an old Muslim villager, Noakhali, December 1946



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Back to his own hut after visiting the sufferers, Noakhali, December 1946


I want you, if you can & will to be with me wherever I go and stay while I am in Bengal. The idea is that I shd be alone only with you as my companion & interpreter. This you shd do only if you can sever your connection with the University & would care to risk death starvation

Satis Babu knows all about my design. You will know from him.

2nd. I want you to collect from town [illegible] & start[illegible] Indian all the following [illegible] to [illegible] & other League leaders' writings & [illegible]

and put them in chronological order giving under each extract dates & origin.

These things you can do simultaneously.

7.12.46

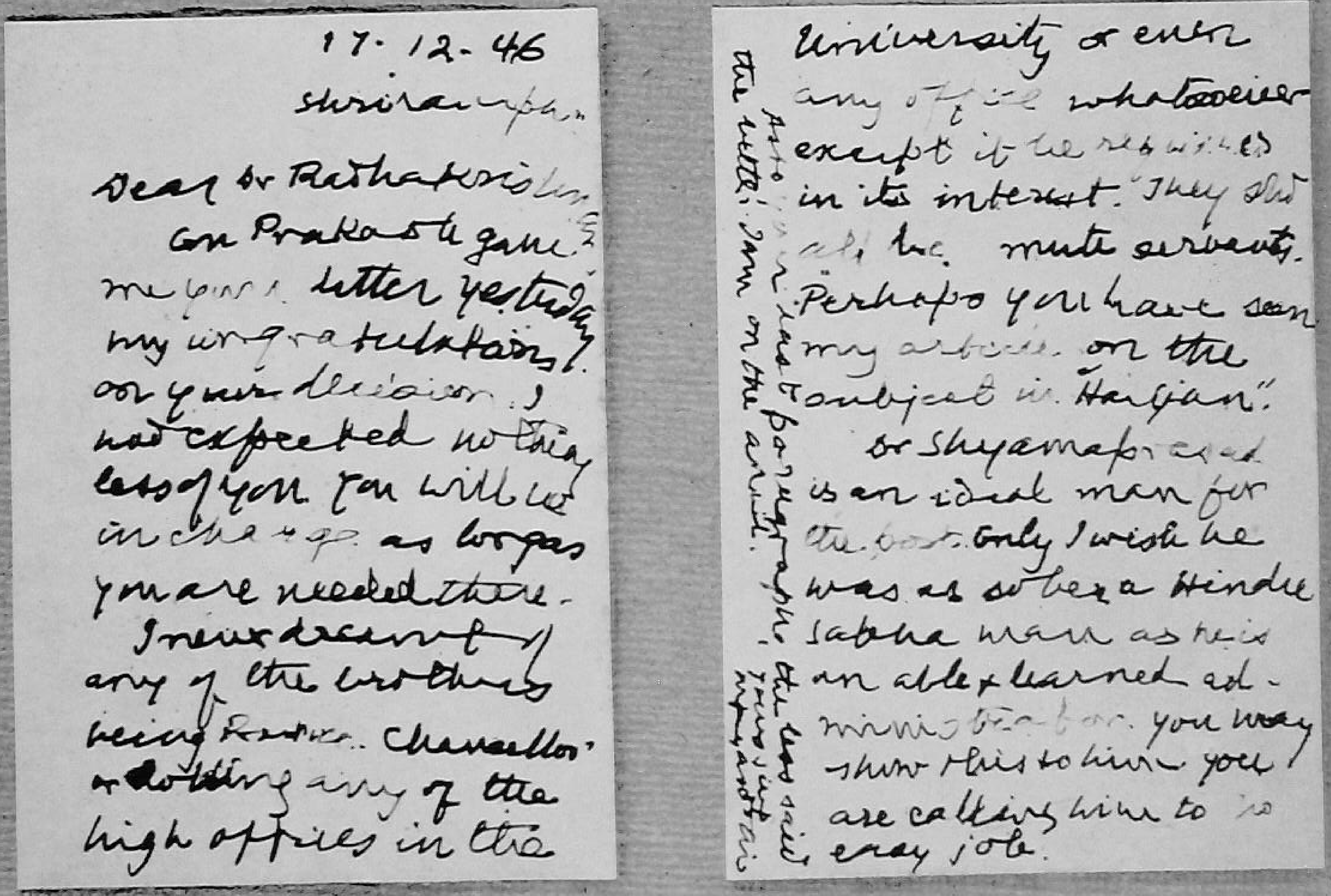
Prayer meeting

Gandhiji referred in [illegible] prayer to a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] contended [illegible] [illegible] lose his possessions for the sake of his self-respect or religion. [illegible]

Those who had in God their sole refuge [illegible] [illegible] all fear. Then [illegible] there could be lasting friendship between the two. He had been trying to [illegible] this lesson [illegible] ears of the listeners. [illegible] There was time when Mussalmans also listened to him; but now things seemed to have changed; and even among Hindus there were not many who would follow his advice. But he felt sure, lasting peace would come [illegible] only when men of whatever community [illegible] refused to surrender to any fear [illegible] the holy fear of God. [illegible]

Courtesy : Prof. N. K. Bose

Gandhi's note to Nirmal Kumar Bose and report of the prayer speech corrected by Gandhi



17-12-46

Shrirampur

Dear Dr Radhakrishnan,

Sri Prakasa gave me your letter yesterday. My congratulations on your decision. I had expected nothing less of you. You will be in the U.P. as long as you are needed there.

I never dreamt of any of the brothers being Vice-Chancellor or holding any of the high offices in the University or even any office whatsoever except if it be required in its interest. They should all be mute servants. Perhaps you have seen my article on the subject in "Harijan".

Dr Shyamaprasad is an ideal man for the post. Only I wish he was as sober a Hindu Sabha man as he is an able & learned administrator. You may show this to him. You are calling him to no easy job.

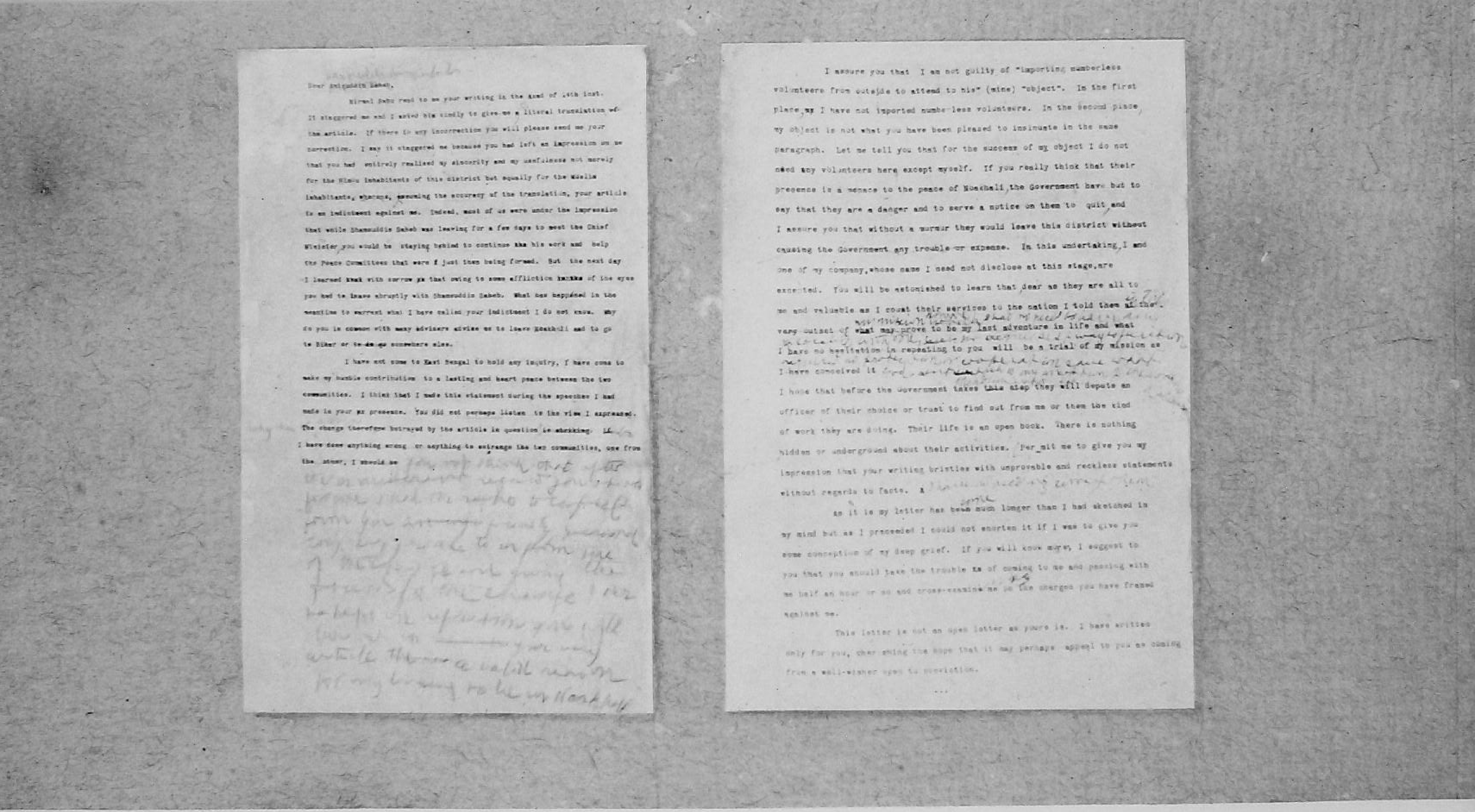
As to your last paragraph, the less said the better. I am on the anvil.

Yours sincerely

M. K. Gandhi

Courtesy : Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

Gandhi's letter to Dr. Radhakrishnan, dated Shrirampur, December 17, 1946



Dear Hamiduddin Saheb,

Nirmal Babu read to me your writing in the Azad of [illegible]th inst. It staggered me and I asked him kindly to give me a literal translation of the article. If there is any incorrection you will please send me your correction. I say it staggered me because you had left an impression on me that you had entirely realised my sincerity and my usefulness not merely for the Hindu inhabitants of this district but equally for the Muslim inhabitants, whereas, assuming the accuracy of the translation, your article is an indictment against me. Indeed, most of us were under the impression that while Shamsuddin Saheb was leaving for a few days to meet the Chief Minister you would be staying behind to continue his work and help the Peace Committees that were just then being formed. But the next day I learned with sorrow that owing to some affliction of the eyes you had to leave abruptly with Shamsuddin Saheb. What has happened in the meantime to warrant what I have called your indictment I do not know. Why do you in common with many advisers advise me to leave Noakhali and to go to Bihar or go somewhere else.

I have not come to East Bengal to hold any inquiry, I have come to make my humble contribution to a lasting and heart peace between the two communities. I think that I made this statement during the speeches I had made in your presence. You did not perhaps listen to the view I expressed. The change therefore betrayed by the article in question is shocking. If I have done anything wrong or anything to estrange the two communities, one from the other, I should be

I assure you that I am not guilty of "importing numberless volunteers from outside to attend to his" (mine) "object". In the first place, I have not imported numberless volunteers. In the second place, my object is not what you have been pleased to insinuate in the same paragraph. Let me tell you that for the success of my object I do not need any volunteers here except myself. If you really think that their presence is a menace to the peace of Noakhali, the Government have but to say that they are a danger and to serve a notice on them to quit, and I assure you that without a murmur they would leave this district without causing the Government any trouble or expense. In this undertaking, I and one of my company, whose name I need not disclose at this stage, are excepted. You will be astonished to learn that dear as they are all to me and valuable as I count their services to the nation I told them at the very outset of what may prove to be my last adventure in life and what I have no hesitation in repeating to you will be a trial of my mission as I have conceived it

I hope that before the Government takes this step they will depute an officer of their choice or trust to find out from me or them the kind of work they are doing. Their life is an open book. There is nothing hidden or underground about their activities. Permit me to give you my impression that your writing bristles with unprovable and reckless statements without regards to facts.

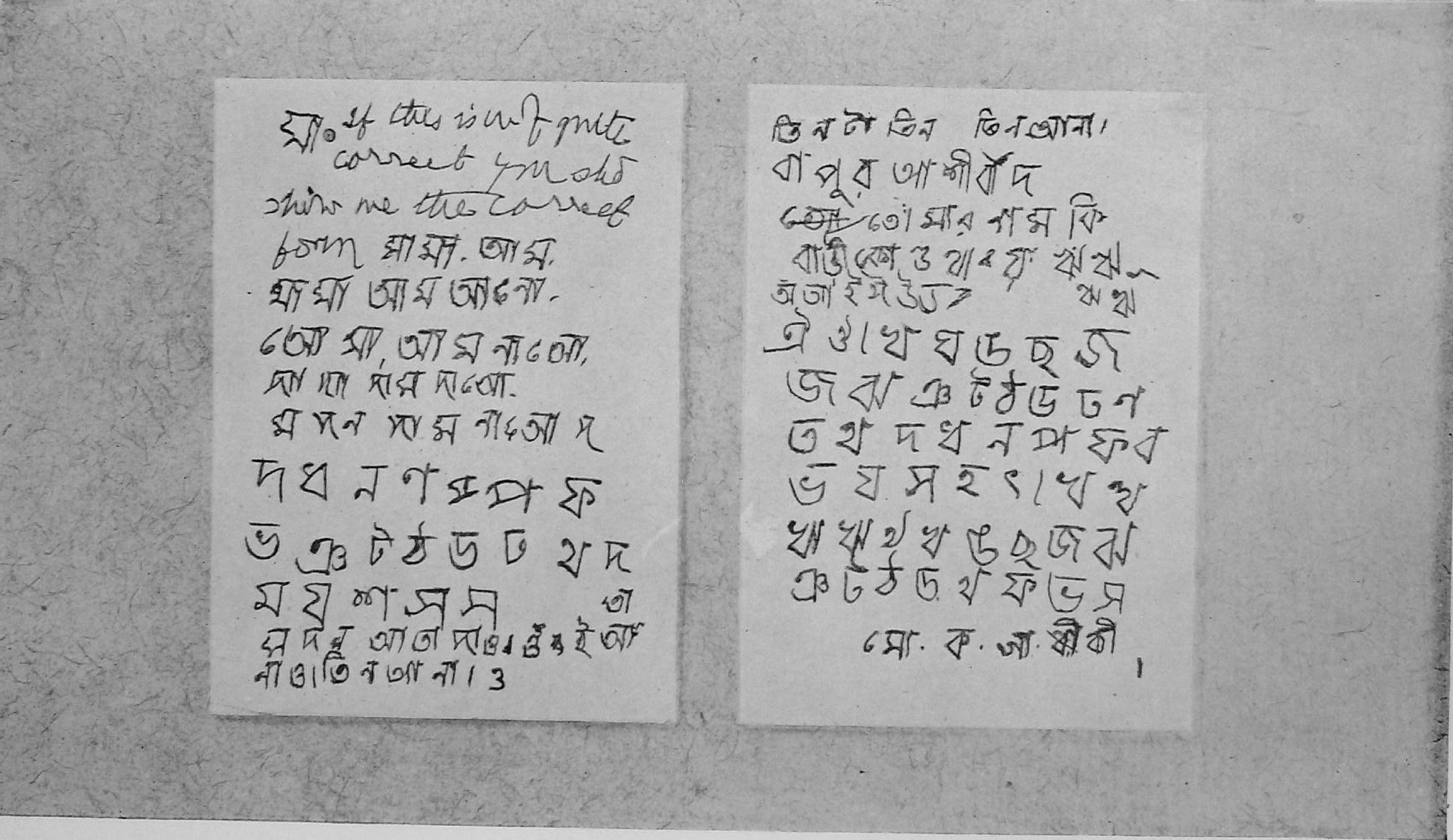
As it is my letter has gone much longer than I had sketched in my mind but as I proceeded I could not shorten it if I was to give you some conception of my deep grief. If you will know more, I suggest to you that you should take the trouble of coming to me and passing with me half an hour or so and cross-examine me on the charges you have framed against me.

This letter is not an open letter as yours is. I have written only for you, cherishing the hope that it may perhaps appeal to you as coming from a well-wisher open to conviction.

...

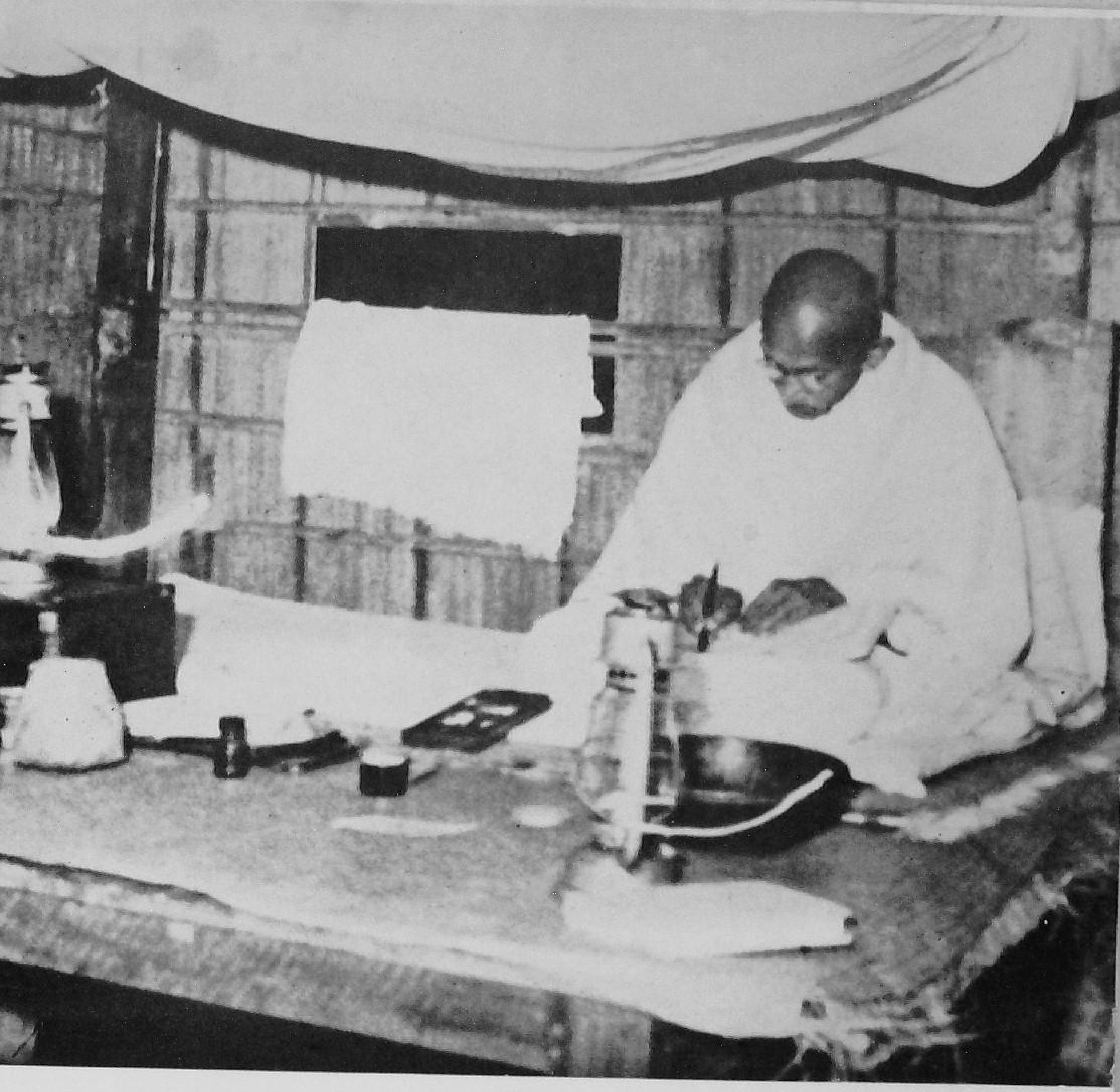
Courtesy : Prof. N. K. Bose

Gandhi's draft letter to Hamiduddin Saheb, dated December 27, 1946




Courtesy : Prof. N. K. Bose

Gandhi's lesson in Bengali which he never missed during the tour of Noakhali



*Photograph : Manju Das*

Gandhi at work in the dim light of kerosene lamp in the early hours of morning, Noakhali, December 1946

should lodge their protest and leave the Congress and influence the public opinion from outside. Then only will they be true servants of the nation. Therefore, at this critical period, I hold it to be necessary for the Working Committee to give proper, unequivocal lead to the Congress by laying down these propositions:

"1. It is now perhaps late to cry off the constituent assembly, although I hold it still to be the best course to make the Congress position absolutely clear.

"2. The second best is to accept the Cabinet Mission's statement with the joint interpretation of it between themselves and Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah.

"3. It must be clearly understood that it is open to any Congress individual or unit to declare his or group's or province's secession from the Congress stand, which the Congress should be free to accept, whilst still openly guiding the seceding element. This will be in accordance with the cabinet's position that they will not compel any group or province.

"The result of this will be that members of Section A will prepare a full constitution in terms of the Cabinet Mission's statement and B and C Sections would have to frame what they can, in spite of the seceders as at present conceived—Assam in the east and Frontier in the west, the Sikhs in Punjab and maybe Baluchistan.

"It may be that the British Government will recognize or set up another constituent assembly. If they do, they will damn themselves for ever. They are bound when a constitution is framed in terms of the Cabinet Mission's stand to leave the rest to fate, every vestige of British authority being wiped out and British soldiers retiring from India, never to return.

"This position of the Congress is in no way to be interpreted as playing completely into the hands of Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah. And if he considers this to be what he meant, the Congress will be thanked by the world for giving the Qaid-e-Azam a universally acceptable and inoffensive formula for his Pakistan. The Congress dare not shirk the right thing, because it completely coincides with his creed.

"The constitution will be for the whole of India. It will have to contain a specific clause in what way it will be open to the boycotters to avail themselves of the constitution."

In bidding good-bye to Srirampur, Nehru said: "It is always a pleasure and inspiration to meet this young man of seventy-seven.

We always feel a little younger, stouter and lighter, when we meet him. The problem of Noakhali is of human beings living in distress and extreme poverty, and oppressed by fear. It is that problem that Mahatmaji is now facing in his own way which produces deep and abiding results in the minds of men."

In a letter to Gandhi, Mrs. Naidu wrote: "Beloved pilgrim, setting out on your pilgrimage of love and hope, 'Go out with God'. I have no fear for you—only faith in your mission."

## *A Village A Day*

### 1947

JANUARY 1st, 1947 was the last day of Gandhi's six weeks' stay in Srirampur. At the prayer congregation, he began by saying that his stay in the village had been amply enriched by the abundance of love showered on him by the members of the household in whose midst he had been living. But God had so designed that he had never had the fortune of staying at one place for a very long time. His travels had now been crowded by experiences, both bitter and sweet.

As a matter of fact, both contact and separation were the normal parts of a man's life. So the daily prayer of the ashramites was that God should give them strength enough to pass through life's varying experiences in a state of equipoise. The verses from the second chapter of the Gita, which were recited every evening, described the characteristics of the man who had actually attained that mental state. Its appeal was not to men of any particular status or calibre alone, but the lesson was of universal significance.

The fact that he was going to leave the village of Srirampur on the next morning was because his duty called him away from that place. He had now to roam from one village to another, in order to contact people in their homes and to carry the message of love and friendship to them. It was his heart's prayer that when he left any place, people should be able to say of him that now one had left them who was their friend and not an enemy.

It was the New Year's Day for the Christians. It was curious that they celebrated it in India with more enthusiasm than they did the coming of the Samvat or Hijra era. That was due to their long association with the ruling class who were Christians by faith.

But as he looked upon all religions as equal, being derived from one source, there was no harm in observing the Christian New Year's Day. At first his idea was that he would give them a reading of two choice sayings from Prophet Mahomed. But later he changed

his mind and he thought of presenting portions from the Christian hymns which had been collected and presented to him by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

There was another matter which he would like to say as his mind was being exercised over it for sometime past. Friends were friends only when they helped one to progress in life. If they discovered any faults in him, it was their duty to acquaint him with them so that he might be able to correct himself. But this had to be done in a sweet manner and with a spirit of helpfulness.

It was the beginning of the New Year and his prayer was that the audience and he might be ushered into it free from the impurities of the lower self, and thus rendered fitter instruments of service to a common cause.

On January 2, old man of seventy-seven began his "pilgrimage" at half past seven in the morning. Clasping a long bamboo staff with his right hand and resting the other on the shoulder of one of his companions, Gandhi started from Srirampur on his historic tour accompanied by Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose, Manu, Parasuram and Ramachandran.

The route to Chandipur, the first village in his tour programme, lay across green fields where the new paddy shoots were just springing up, through long vistas of betelnut trees.

Although Gandhi had expressed his wish that he should be left alone and that none should follow him, a crowd of about hundred villagers, mostly men, trekked behind him, as he strode forward. As he passed by the populated localities on the fringe of the village, Hindus and Muslims stood on either side of the narrow path.

Mr. Abdullah, the police superintendent, accompanied him with eight armed guards. At one point on the route, when it was pointed out to Gandhi that some Muslim villagers wished to come near him but were afraid as police were going with the party, he smilingly referred this to the police superintendent, who thereupon asked the guards to go ahead and not to cling near to Gandhi.

On the way, Gandhi took rest for about five minutes. He drank a glass of orange juice offered to him here. His next brief halt was at a village predominantly inhabited by the Muslims in the Changirgaon area. A pandal had been put up for his reception by a Muslim resident, Maulvi Fazlul Huq, who had visited Gandhi the previous evening and had requested him to stop for some time at his house.

The maulvi presented him with a tray of fruits which Gandhi distributed among the children gathered there. The maulvi said that the villagers felt much gratified that a great man like Gandhi had set foot in their village.

On entering open country-side and nearing Chandipur, Souren Bose, who was in charge of Chandipur centre, started singing Ramdhun and the followers took up strain and sang in chorus.

Gandhi entered Chandipur at nine to the singing of Ramdhun by the members of the Gram Seva Sangh. The villagers greeted him, some touched his feet. Womenfolk received him with *uludhwani*, a form of greeting peculiar to Bengal villages.

Gandhi held his prayer meeting in front of his hut at half past four in the evening. Addressing the audience, he observed that his tour could not yet be said to have begun. He had only changed his place of residence from Srirampur to the next village of Chandipur where he would remain for three or four days, during which time the final arrangements would be made by Satish Dasgupta.

He said that his mission was for the establishment of friendship between the sister communities and not to organize any one community against the rest. So long, the non-violence which had been practised was the non-violence of the weak, but the new experiment in which he had now been engaged here was the non-violence of the strong. If it were to be successful, it should succeed in creating a moral atmosphere helpful to both communities round him. Only when the Hindus and Muslims shed their fear and mutual suspicion could real unity of heart come. There should not be any cause for hostility, because their hearts were one.

Referring to the task of village reorganization, Gandhi said that East Bengal was a land of gold, but unfortunately life of the people was not as it should be. Tanks were so dirty that he could not dare even wash his hands in them. Villages were also unclean. The rich were growing richer, and the poor were getting poorer. That was not forced upon them by nature. That was a satanic state of affairs. But although the social arrangements were satanic, the individuals were not so. Individuals should raise their organization and shape it according to new ideas of equality and comradeship.

He asked Hindus and Muslims to devote themselves to the noble task of reorganizing the village life and of improving their economic condition. Through the cottage industries, they would find themselves

working together in the common task, and unity would thereby grow among them. He exhorted the audience to carry on his eighteen-point constructive programme which would spread like a life-giving influence over the entire country-side.

Addressing the women, who had assembled in the courtyard of his hut, Gandhi said that they should depend on God and on their own strength and not on others. They should be more courageous and should have more confidence in their own strength. If they were afraid, they would fall easy victims to the onslaughts of the miscreants. "Indian women are not *abalas*," he said. "They are famous for their heroic deeds of the past, which they did not achieve with the help of the sword, but of character. Even today, they can help the nation in many ways. They can do some useful work by which they can not only help themselves, but also the nation as a whole, thereby taking the country nearer her goal."

Gandhi added that not the men of Noakhali only were responsible for all that had happened, but women were equally responsible. He asked them to be fearless and have faith in God like Draupadi and Sita.

He admonished them to eschew untouchability. If they still went on disowning the untouchables, more sorrow was in store for them. He asked the audience to invite a Harijan every day to dine with them. And if they could not do so, they could call a Harijan before taking a meal and ask him to touch the drinking water or the food. This would go a long way to cement the gulf created between the different classes of people by artificial caste barriers. Unless they did penance for their sins in that way, more calamities and more severe ones would overtake them all.

On January 4, Gandhi opened a school at Changirgaon, a village about one mile from Chandipur. He inquired as to what subjects were taught and pointed out that he would not like schools to be run on the same old lines and advised the introduction of crafts. The aim of education should be to make students self-supporting.

That day after the prayers, Gandhi said that he had not come here to talk politics. His purpose was not to reduce the influence of the Muslim League or to increase that of the Congress, but to speak to the people of the little things about their daily life, things which, if properly attended to, would change the face of the land and create a heaven out of the pitiable conditions in which they

were all living today. Bengal was a land full of verdure, with plenty of water and fertile soil. Nature had showered her abundance on Bengal, but through ignorance, people were suffering from poverty and disease. They appeared to be content with what little could be earned from betelnut and coconut gardens and a little of agriculture. But with more knowledge, they could increase the productivity of land many times and convert their villages into cleaner abodes of peace and prosperity. If all the villagers joined together, the face of the land would be changed in no time.

To the evacuees, he said that they should return home and face dangers and difficulties. Any one who had committed a sin should likewise make a clean confession to God, and depend upon God for whatever He might choose to do. Truly religious men who made a confession to God did not repeat their errors.

In his next day's discourse at Kazibazar, a village about one mile from Chandipur, he said that it was continually being impressed upon him that his place was no longer in Bengal but in Bihar, where infinitely worse things were alleged to have taken place. The audience should be aware that he had all along been in correspondence with the popular Government in Bihar and all influence possible was being exercised by him over the Bihar Government from Bengal; but he did not want to leave Noakhali, because his task here was of an entirely different order. He had to prove by living among the Muslims that he was as much their friend as of the Hindu or any other community. This could evidently not be done from a distance or by mere word of mouth.

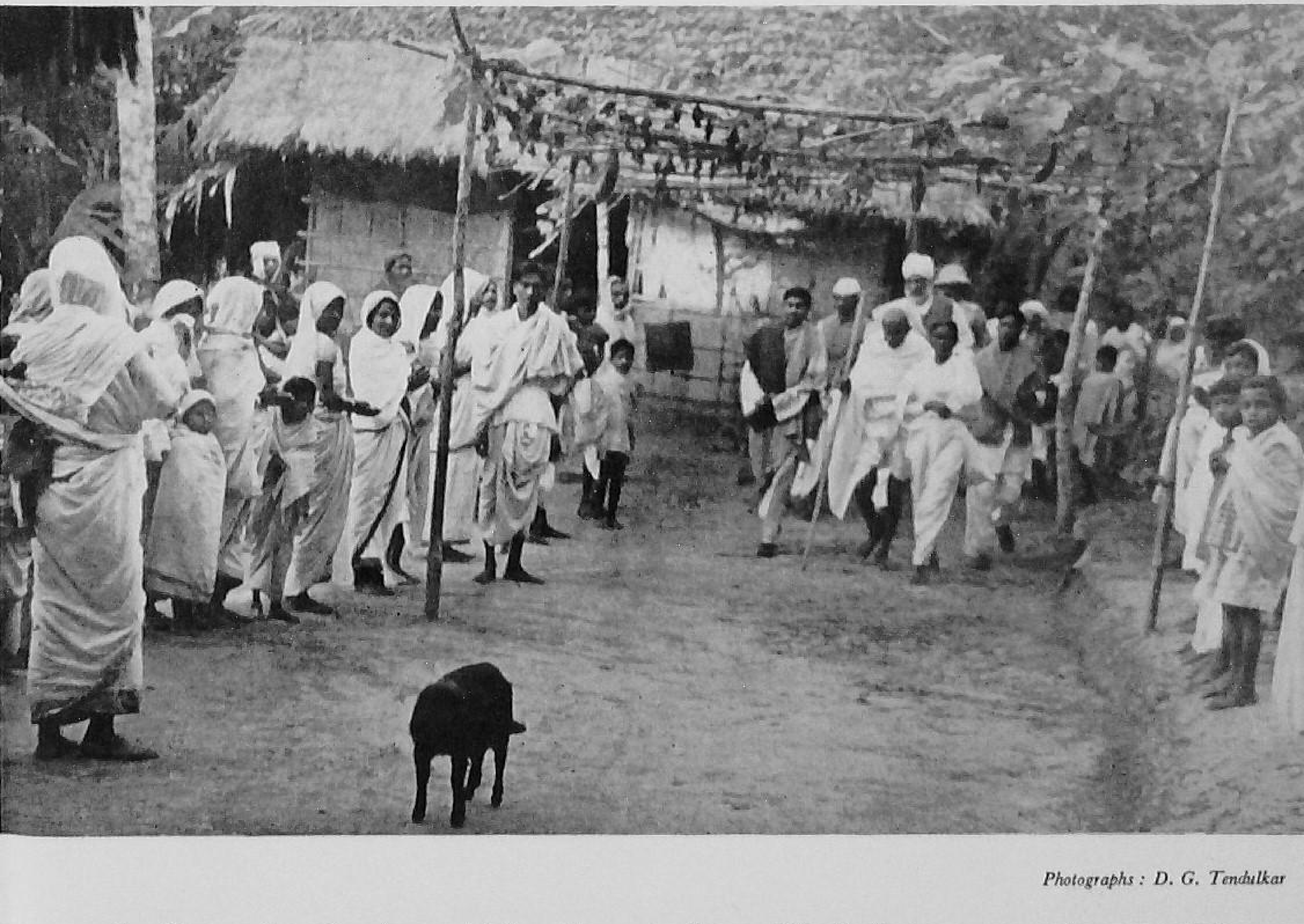
A Bihar minister and several responsible officials who had come to him had placed before him all the facts within their knowledge without any reservation. They had admitted that brutal things had taken place in the course of one fateful week and that they were prepared to bear all justifiable censure passed on them on that account. They knew their duty as a responsible government. The charge of complicity or of failure in doing all that was humanly possible was denied by them and they said that they were prepared to undergo any ordeal, in order to prove their innocence. They had been trying to answer the charges made by the Muslim League against them. Gandhi said he would like to assure the audience that he would not rest until he was satisfied personally about the Bihar case and had done all that was humanly possible.

The attendance of both Hindus and Muslims in prayer meetings was dwindling, remarked Gandhi. One day he would be left without anybody to listen to him at all. But even then, there would be no reason for him to give up his mission in despair. He would then move from village to village, taking his spinning wheel. With him it was an act of service of God. Such labour undertaken with an unselfish mind would speak for itself among those who were round him. A worker who travelled from village to village teaching the people how to clean their ponds effectively, and teaching them other arts and crafts, so as to enrich the life of the villagers, should be able to make the villagers long for his company, rather than shun him.

Gandhi said that the news had just reached him that the evacuees were now returning in fair numbers and the question of rehabilitation was becoming more and more acute. His advice to the evacuees would be that they should brave all hardships and should return home quickly. By means of their own labour they must determine to rebuild their ruined homes, as well as their own lives. Government should extend all necessary help and they should be approached by the evacuees. He was aware of the fact that the various relief organizations were prepared to help the evacuees with finance and other material assistance. But why should they undertake the task which rightly belonged to the Government set up by the people themselves? If the Government failed to extend it either quickly enough, or to a satisfactory extent, then it was for them to say so and to seek the supplementary aid from the public charities, in order to rehabilitate the people. But whatever shape these arrangements might take, the evacuees must be prepared to return home in the face of all possible dangers and difficulties.

"Appeasement has become a word of bad odour. In no case, can there be any appeasement at the cost of honour. The real appeasement is to shed all fear and to do what is right at any cost," said Gandhi in reply to a question by the members of the Chandipur-Changirgaon Gram Seva Sangh on January 6. The question put to Gandhi was: what should the sangh do to appease the aggressive mentality of the majority community?

In answer to a question as to whether the refugees should accept any monetary assistance from the Government, even if it was quite insufficient for the erection of the temporary shelter, Gandhi said: "Refugees must honestly find out what they need for the least kind

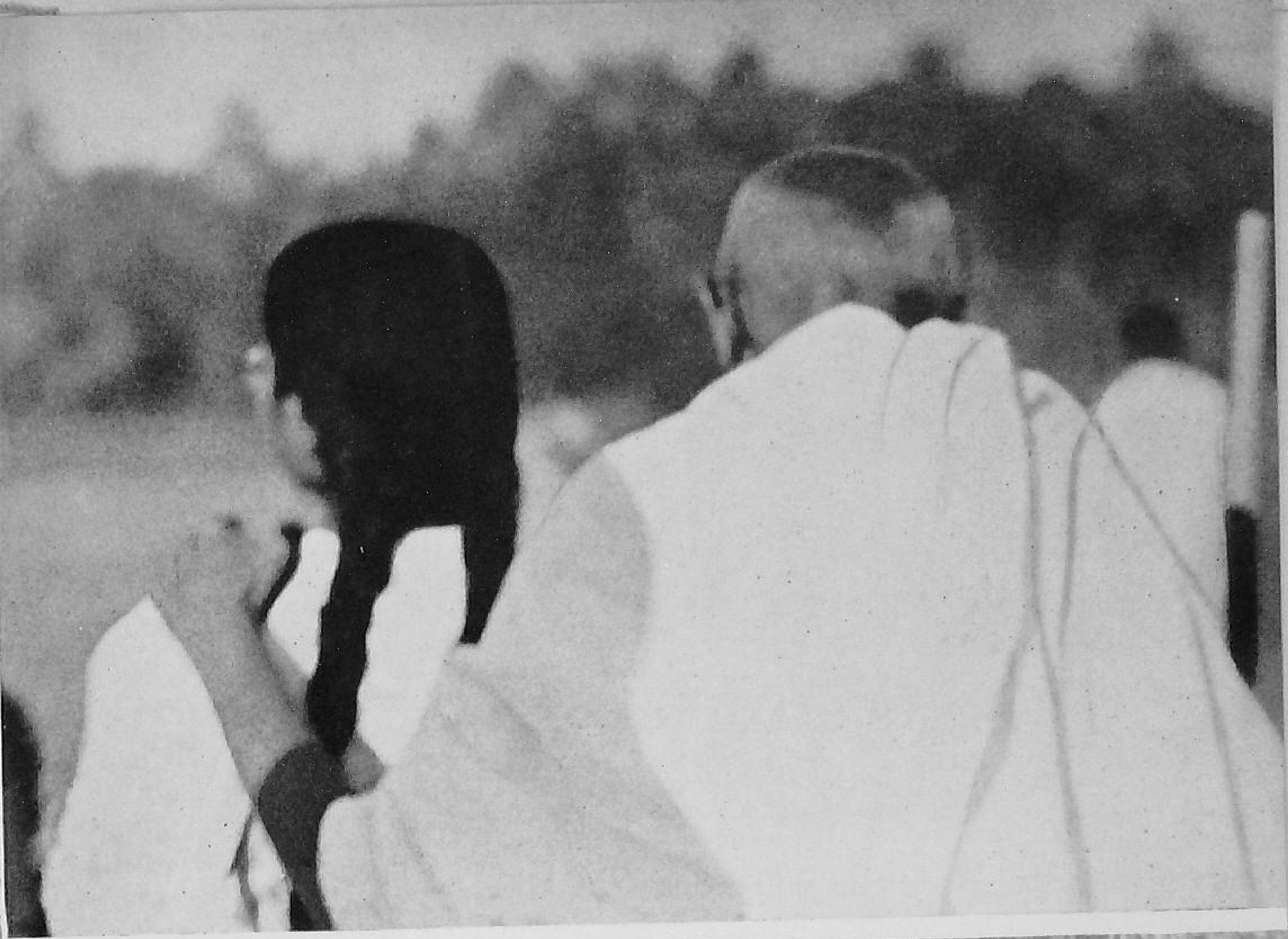


*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

Gandhi starts from Chandpur on his " a village a day " tour of Noakhali at 7-25 a.m. on January 7, 1947

*Photograph : K. Natarajan*

Emerging out of a village boundary, followed by the armed police escort



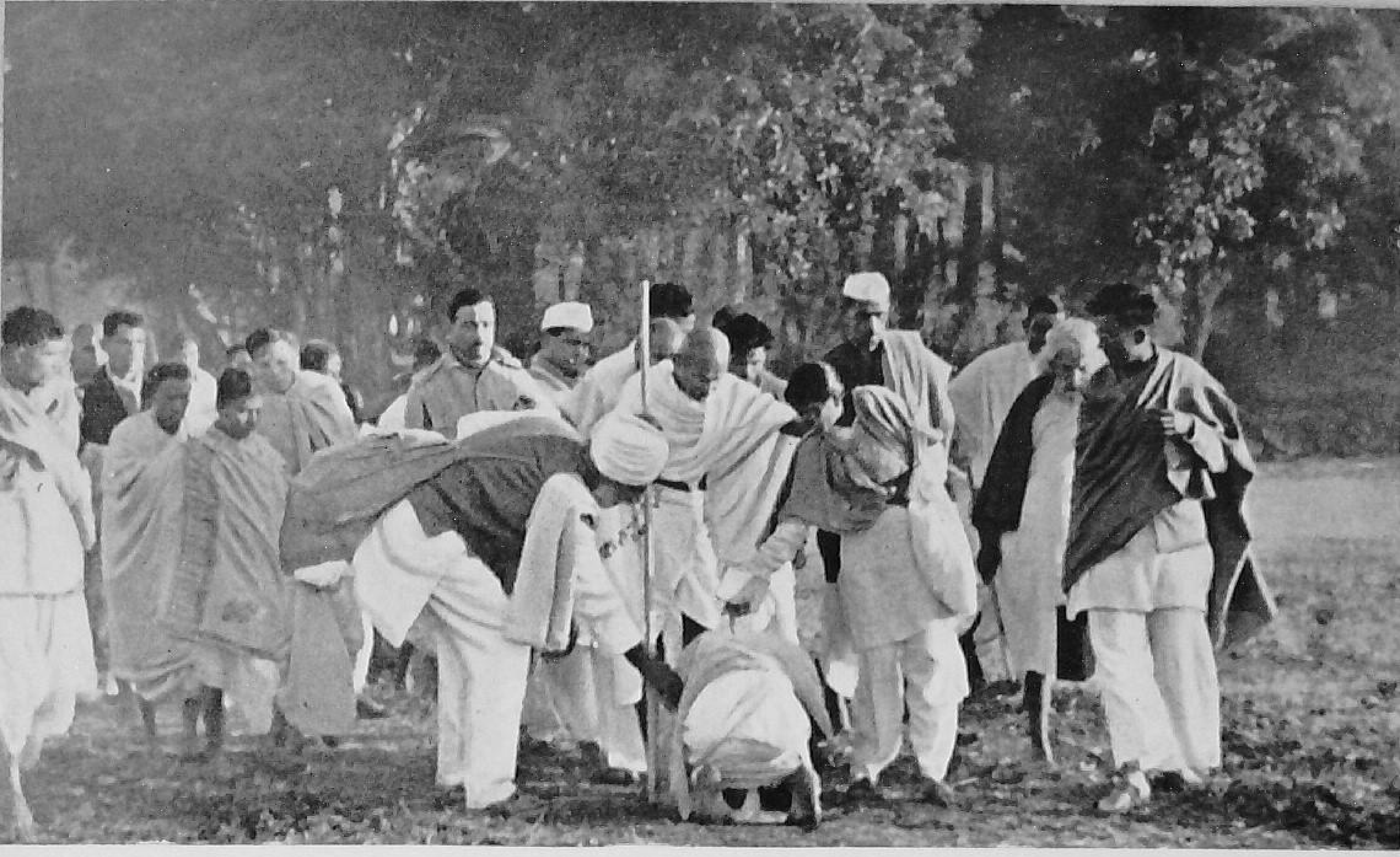
*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

Onward march of the barefoot pilgrim

Hindus and Muslims

Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar

greeting Gandhi on the way

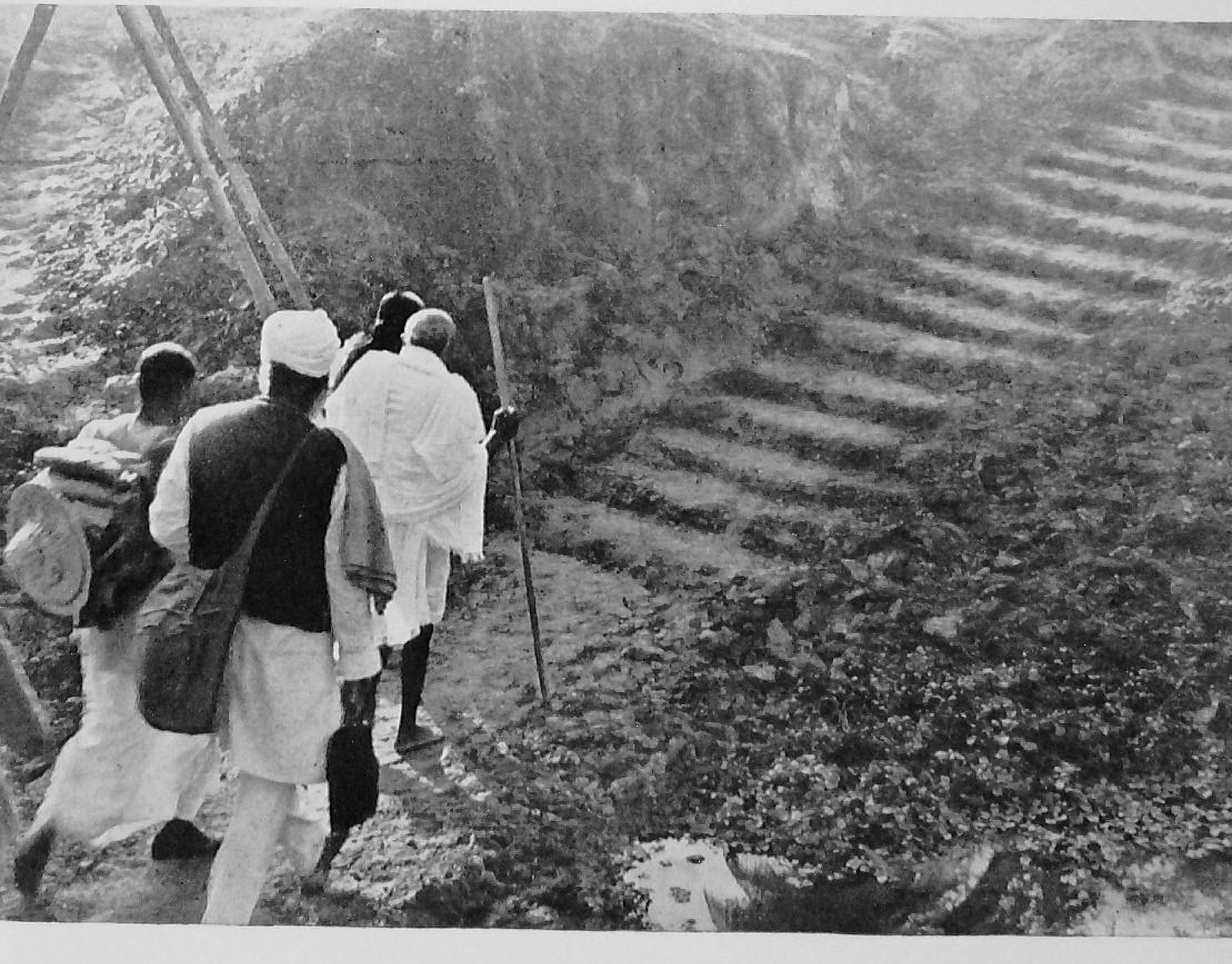


During the march through

Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar

the fields of a Noakhali village

Accompanied by villagers and co-workers,



*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

Gandhi negotiating a brook during the march

His onward march

*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

through the fields of Noakhali

*Photograph : D. G. Tendulkar*

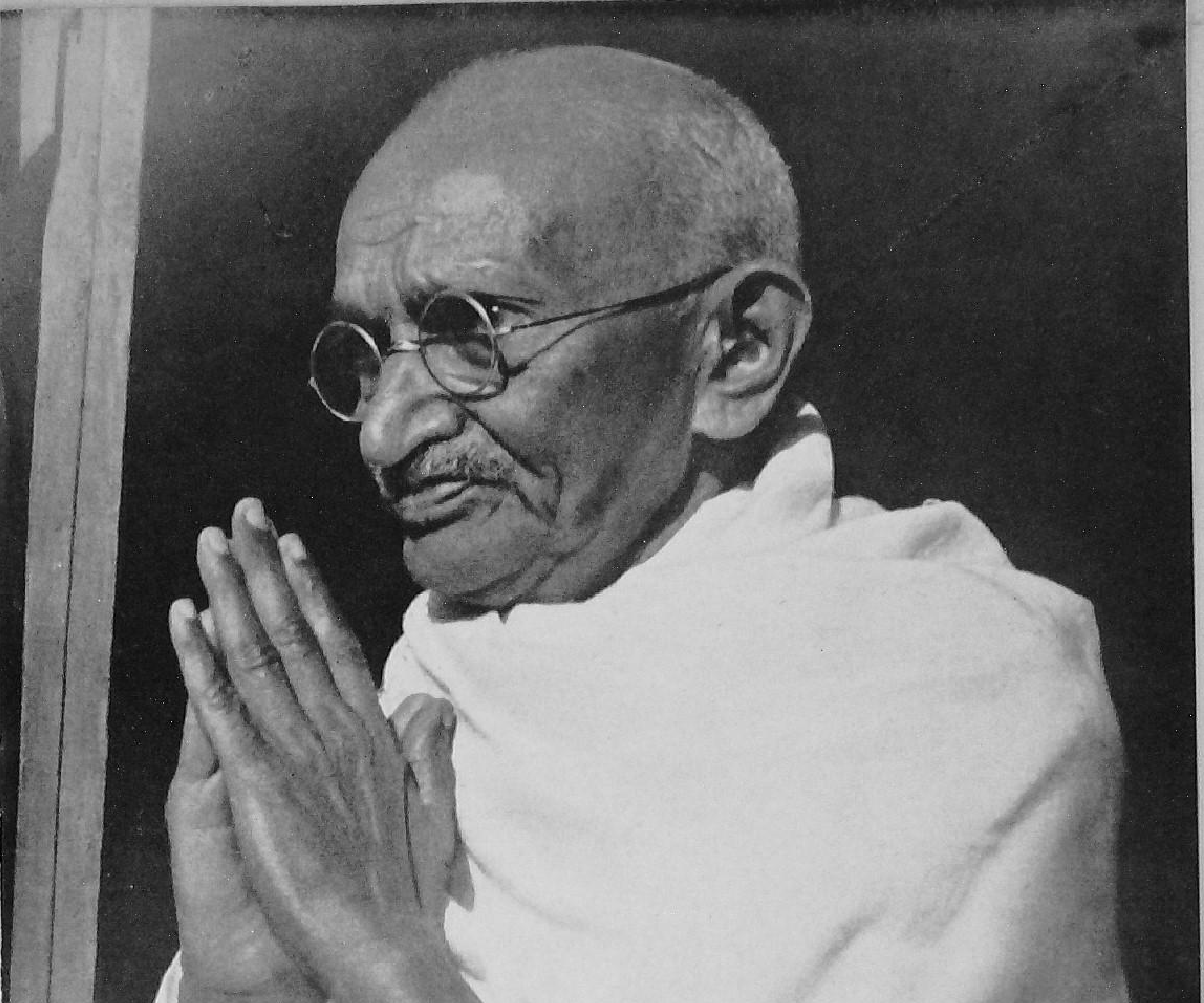
Nearing the place of destination of the walking tour programme of over an hour

*Photograph : K. Natarajan*

His feet being washed after the end of the daily march

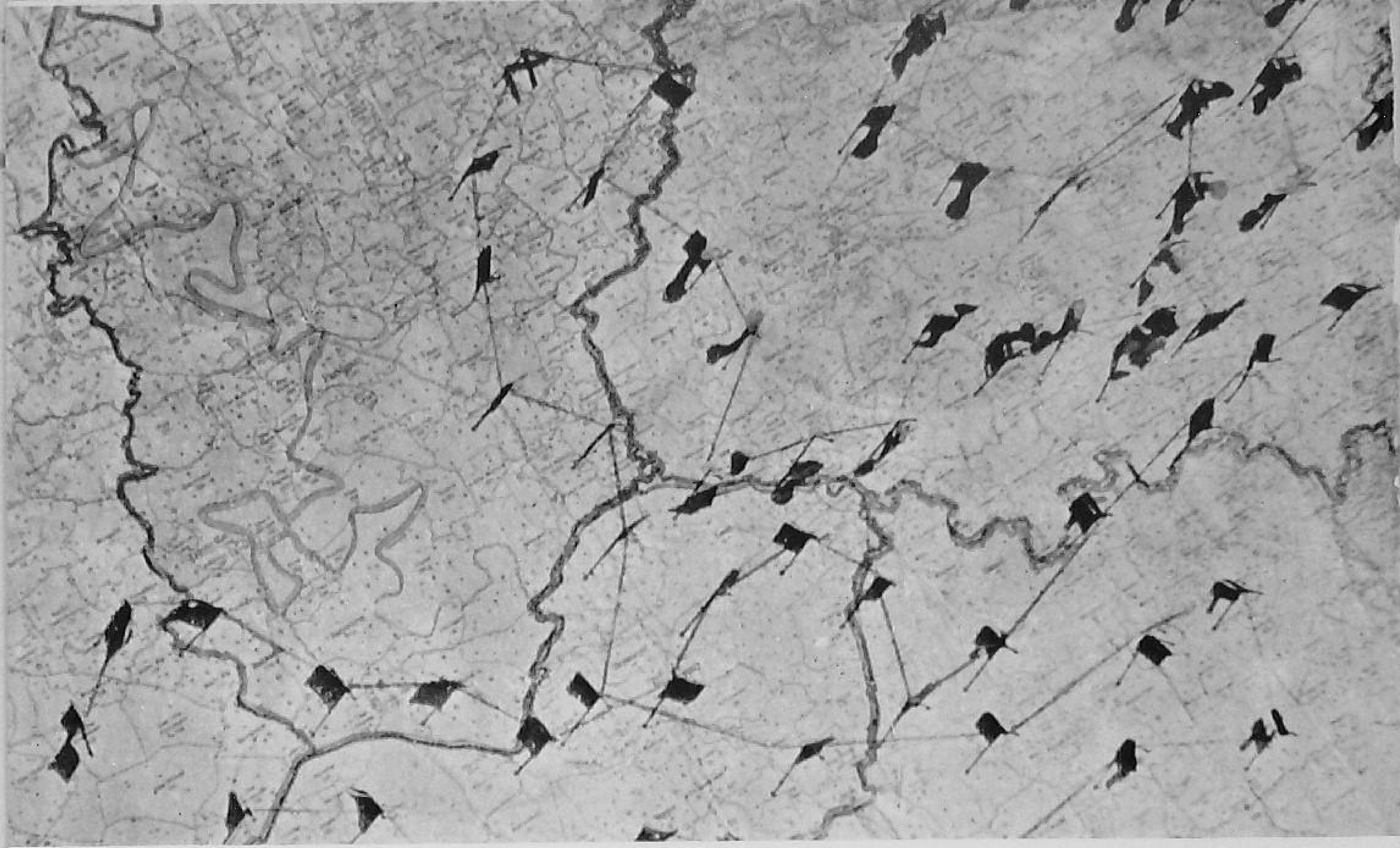
Photographs: D. G. Tendulkar

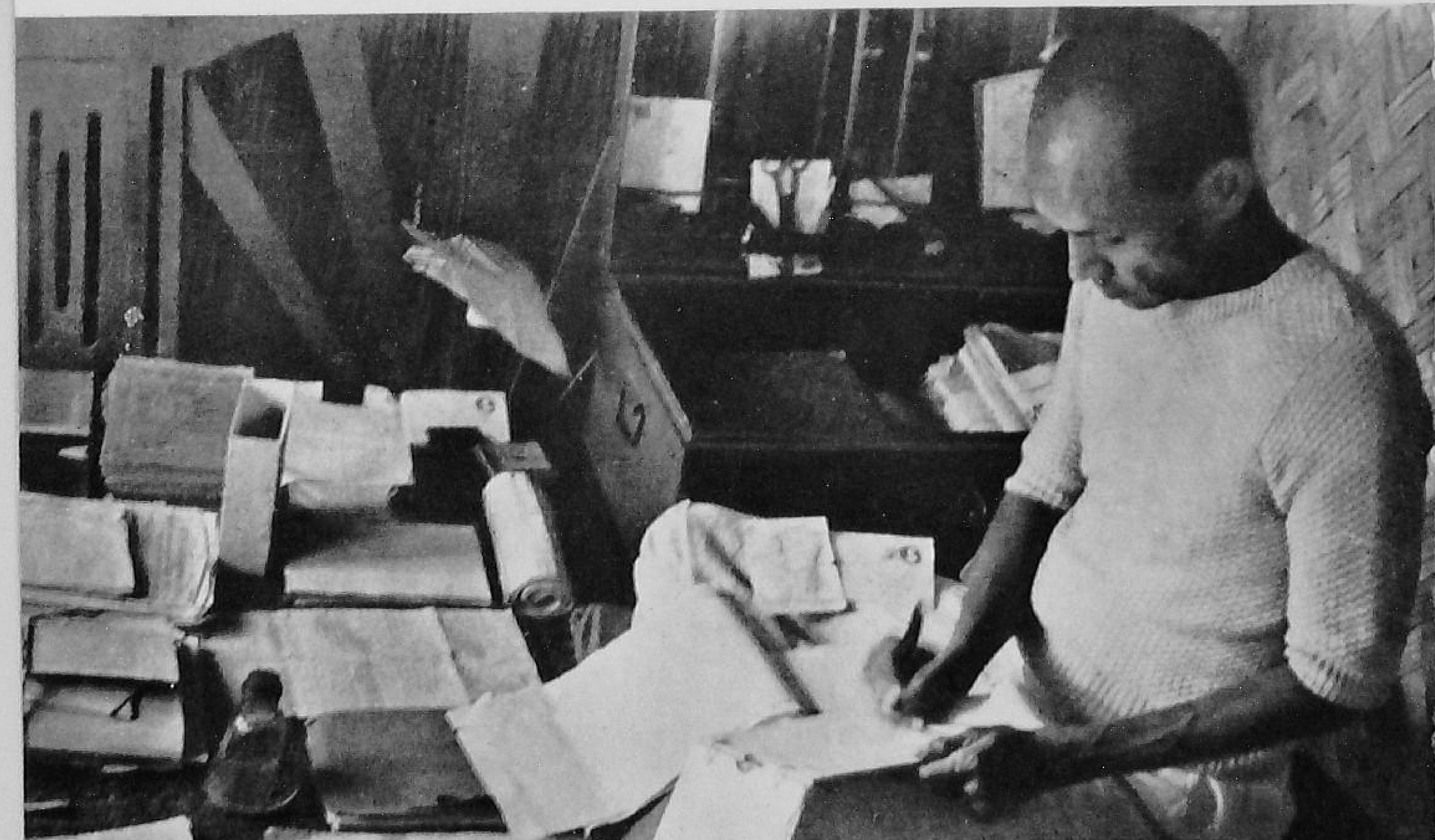
Villagers awaiting his arrival
Gandhi entering a villager's hut for his night sojourn



*Photograph : D. G. Tendulkar*

Greeting the villagers





*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

The tour map in his camp showing the villages covered

Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose, Gandhi's secretary, at work in the day's camp

of temporary shelter. If their basic requirements are not covered by the proposed Government grants, then the refugees should refuse to accept the grants but should still return to their homes, even if it meant no cover over their heads. This has to be done in a spirit of sportsmanship."

Question: "In the course of rehabilitation, should the members of the minority community be lodged together in sufficient numbers for the purpose of safety?"

Gandhi: "Such concentration of population is an unthinkable proposition. It would imply that the whole country would be divided into hostile sections, perhaps, enjoying a sort of armed peace. The manly thing to do is for every individual, of whatever sect, whether young or old, to derive protection from one's inner strength which comes from God."

Question: "If the Government and private rélief is stopped, what work can we give to the refugees, so that they can earn their daily bread?"

Gandhi: "Although, personally, I should be tempted to suggest hand-spinning as a universal occupation, I would not necessarily do so in the present case. I would suggest that the workers should find out on the basis of detailed local inquiries what occupation could be undertaken in each village. And when such information is available, I would love to give advice in greater detail. It is certain that the work must be done in co-operation."

At the prayer meeting on Monday, January 6, he dwelt on the purpose of his tour. It being his day of silence, the prayer speech was read out by Nirmal Kumar Bose:

" As my weekly silence will not break before seven, I have written out my address. I pray to God and request you all to join with me in praying that the tour which I commenced yesterday should go on uninterrupted till the end, and should be successful in achieving its purpose. But before praying, you should know that purpose. I have only one object in view and it is a clear one, namely, that God should purify the hearts of Hindus and Muslims, and the two communities should be free from suspicion and fear towards each other. Please join with me in this prayer and say that God is the Lord of us both and that He may give us success.

"You might well ask me why it is necessary to undertake a tour for this purpose; or how can one, who is not pure in heart himself,

ask others to become pure; or how can one, who himself is subject to fear, give courage to others; or one, who himself moves under an armed escort, call upon others to cast away their arms. All these questions are relevant and have been put to me.

"My answer is that during my tour I wish to assure the villagers to the best of my capacity that I bear not the least ill will towards any. I can prove this only by living and moving among those, who distrust me. I admit that the third question is a little difficult for me to answer; for, I do happen to be moving under armed protection, I am surrounded by armed police and military, keenly alert to guard me from all danger. I am helpless in the matter, as it is arranged by the Government, which being responsible to the people feels that it is their duty to keep me guarded by the police and the military. How can I prevent the Government from doing so? Under the circumstances, I can declare only in words that I own no protector but God. I do not know whether you will believe my statement. God alone knows the mind of a person; and the duty of a man of God is to act as he is directed by his inner voice. I claim that I act accordingly.

"You might here ask that there was at least no reason for the Sikhs to go with me. They have not been posted by the Government. Let me inform you first that they have obtained the permission of the Government for going with me. They have not come here to create quarrels. In testimony, the Sikhs have come without their usual *kirpans*. They have come to render service to both the communities impartially. The first lesson which the Netaji taught to the soldiers of his Indian National Army was that Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and the others should all regard India as their common motherland, and they should all substantiate their unity by working for her jointly. Sikhs here wish to serve both the communities under my guidance. How—on what ground—can I send away such friends? They have been giving me valuable assistance and that not for making a public show thereof, but in a spirit of genuine service. If I refused that service, I should fall in my own estimate and prove myself a coward. I request you, too, to trust these people, regard them as your brethren and accept their services. They are capable of rendering much help and have plenty of experience of this kind of work. God has blessed them with physical strength and also faith.

"If I find that what I have said about them was incorrect, they would go back. If, on the other hand, I am keeping them with an ulterior motive, it will prove to be my own ruin, besides making my experiment a failure.

"The particular object-lessons, which I propose to give you during my tour, are how you can keep the village water and yourself clean; what use you can properly make of the earth, of which our bodies are made; how you can obtain the life-force from the infinite sky spreading over your heads; how you can reinforce your vital energy from the air, which surrounds you; and how you can make the proper use of the sunlight. This is to say that I shall try to teach you how we can convert our impoverished country into a land of gold by making the right use of these various elements around us. I pray to God that I may succeed in serving you in the manner set forth above."

On the morning of January 7, Gandhi started on his "one village a day" tour. That day, during the early morning prayer, he asked Manu Gandhi to sing his favourite hymn "Vaishnava Janato", "the true Vaishnava is he who feels the sufferings of others." He said that the word Vaishnava should be replaced by Muslim, Isai (Christian) now and then during the chorus. As the little group sang, Gandhi himself joined the chorus. The pitch of his voice was low, but the tune was correct.

At 7.25 a.m. he came out of his hut and had an impressive farewell at Chandipur from the members of the family with whom he stayed. Holding on her hand a tray with a burning *pradip,* the hostess applied vermilion mark on his head and touched his feet.

Shri Satis Dasgupta of Khadi Parstisthan walked ahead. Gandhi as he walked on was followed by a large crowd, who joined the long line behind him from the villages on the way. On the route, women kept waiting for Gandhi and, as he passed, loud strain of *uludhwani* greeted him.

He walked barefoot through the fields, though he had a crack on his foot. On the way, he halted at three places and reached his first halt, the village of Masimpur, at nine, covering a distance of two and a half miles in ninety minutes.

Immediately his routine started. At half past four, he reached the prayer meeting which was deserted by the Muslims when Ramdhun commenced.

Addressing the gathering, about 2,000 strong, with a large number of women among them, Gandhi stated he was glad that today was his first day of the walking tour. He felt sorry that his Muslim brothers had left the prayer meeting. He thought that there must be some reason for their going away and said that he was told that Muslims had left, as Ramanam was being recited at prayer. He was glad that a large crowd had assembled that day. He was told that Muslims did not like reciting Ramanam and for that also he was glad. This apprised him of the position where he stood. Muslims thought God could be called only by the name Khuda. Behind all that had happened in Noakhali in October last was this attitude of intolerance of others' religion. Hindus might be small in numbers, but they should know that Ramanam and the name of Khuda were the same. Europeans said God, Hindus said Rama and others called God by many other names. He was told that in Pakistan everyone could follow any religion he liked, that no one would be obstructed in following his own religion. But from what he saw here today, it was something else. The Hindus here were required to forget their Hinduism and call God as Khuda. All religions were equal.

When Gandhi arrived at Masimpur for his one-day stay, he was presented with a memorandum prepared by the Gram Seva Sangh. The report said that a total of 669 houses were looted—and 334 of them burnt—in a village within the Ramganj police station area. The loss and the damage to property were estimated at two lakhs of rupees. There was no loss of life among the minority population, the reason being that all were converted to another religion.

After the prayer, Gandhi took a walk for over an hour and visited some Muslim villagers in their huts. Returning to his hut by half past six, he worked for two to three hours and was fast asleep by half past nine.

On January 8, he woke up at four, as usual, to say his morning prayers. In company with his co-workers, one chapter from the Gita was recited. By five he drank warm water with honey, and a little later had a glass of fruit juice. Then he sat for work till half past seven, when he had to get ready for his march.

Leaving Masimpur at 7.40 a.m., Gandhi again walked barefoot. His way lay through the Muslim areas and the Muslims greeted him with *salaams*. He reached Fatehpur, the next village in his tour programme, after a little over one hour's journey.

Gandhi said at the prayer meeting that he had been surrounded by affection all round, and among the messages received were some from sisters. They wanted to present him with sweets, specially prepared by them, but he had replied that he was hungering not for sweets for the tongue, but for sweets for the heart. He was grateful for the accommodation offered by the village, and that was all that he needed. He did not want to be a burden on any village through which he was passing. His own food was carried along with him, while the expenses of the whole party had already been defrayed by loving friends.

Some Muslim friends had asked him why a feeling of estrangement was growing between the two communities, in spite of the able leadership around, more specially in the Congress and the Muslim League. He had confessed that it was indeed true that the people in general always followed the lead which came from above. Therefore, it was not enough that leadership was able, but it was necessary that there was accurate knowledge of the wants of the people. For himself, he was only trying to depend wholly upon God and work at the task which came naturally before him. He commended the same course to everyone.

The tour continued according to plan. The prayer gathering at Daspara on January 9 was held in the compound of a local school. Addressing the assembled, Gandhi said that at the previous village he had lived at the house of Maulvi Ibrahim and a large number of Muslims were present at the prayer. He had always intended that he should live in the Muslim houses during his tour in East Bengal. His hosts would not have to spend anything, as his needs regarding food would previously have been arranged for. He only wanted shelter from his Muslim friends.

He was pained to learn that many people in the village had left as they heard that he had with him military and police. He would not like to depend on the military or the police for protection, but the Bengal Government had decided to give him this protection. After all, who could protect him if he fell ill or was otherwise to die. Only God could give real protection. Innocent people have no fear. If people had done anything in error, they should repent before God and pray for His forgiveness.

Suhrawardy Government was a Muslim League Government. If people disliked that a person touring their district should be given

military protection, they should ask the Government to withdraw such protection from their guest and should assure him that they themselves would give him protection, if he needed it at all.

He arrived at Jagatpur village at half past eight in the morning of January 10. Gandhi's route was marked by knots of bystanders who were all Muslims, as the area was predominantly populated by Muslims. About 400 Hindu women with children were present at the prayer meeting which was held near his cottage.

Addressing the meeting, Gandhi said that he had been hearing that if Muslims asked Hindus to accept Islam if they wanted to save themselves or their property and if Hindus responded, there was no compulsion. He was not concerned for a moment with the truth or otherwise of that statement. What he wanted to say was that this was acceptance of Islam under the threat of force.

Conversion was made of sterner stuff. The statement reminded him of days when the Christian missionaries so-called used to buy children in the days of famine and brought them up as Christians. This was surely no acceptance of Christianity. Similarly, acceptance of Islam, to be real and valid, should be wholly voluntary and must be based on proper knowledge of the two faiths—one's own faith and the one presented for acceptance. He could not conceive of the possibility of such acceptance of Islam by women in front of him or children. This was the view he had held all his life. He did not believe in conversion as an institution. He would not ask his friends to accept Hinduism, because he happened to be a Hindu. Those who came to him with such a mind were recommended the proper study of Hinduism and were told to incorporate in his or her own religion, what was considered as good in Hinduism. He said that he called himself not merely a Hindu but a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew, a Sikh, a Parsi, a Jain or a man of any other sect, meaning thereby that he had absorbed all that was commendable in all other religions and sub-religions. In this way, he avoided any clash and expanded his own conception of religion.

What he had said might not commend itself to everybody. But he would like every Muslim to consider, whether, from what he had said, it was not possible for the Muslims to see that Islam was much superior to what had been described to him during his pilgrimage. He had prayerfully studied, as much as he could, in his busy life, of Islam's history written by Muslim divines, and he had not found

a single passage in condonation of forcible conversion such as he had described. Real conversion proceeded from the heart, and a heart conversion was impossible without an intelligent grasp of one's own faith and that recommended for adoption.

In conclusion, Gandhi said that he was not going to be satisfied without a heart understanding between the two communities and this was not possible, unless the Hindus and Muslims were prepared to respect each other's religions, leaving the process of conversion absolutely free and voluntary.

The trek from Jagatpur to Lamchar on January 11 was marked by great enthusiasm. During the first seven days of his tour, he had to work for about twenty hours per day, in order to dispose of his heavy correspondence which had accumulated. Every day, he used to go to bed at ten and wake up very early at two in the morning and work until five in the dim light of kerosene lantern.

He left Lamchar in the morning of January 12th, and arrived at Karpara. He was staying at the house of the late Roy Choudhury, who along with the twenty-nine members of his family, had lost his life in the October disturbances. This village, which was one of the starting points of the conflagration in the area, had a population of 5,000, of whom 3,500 were Hindus and the rest Muslims. Gandhi had a busy day here. Soon after his arrival, he had bath and in an hour's time was sitting in the middle of a roofless brick enclosure busy with files of correspondence. In the afternoon, he addressed the local people. He later spoke to carpenters, weavers and women.

Nirmal Kumar Bose, in a press statement dated January 12, said: "Although of late, Gandhiji has been commencing his work at two in the morning, he is unable to cope with the work before him. He has, from today, reverted to three o'clock standard time. Gandhiji feels that he must resolutely refuse to tackle all-India correspondence and refrain from sending messages to men and institutions. He proposes to confine his activities solely to Noakhali and the kindred disturbed areas. He says that if he emerges safely from the ordeal, he will gladly resume his other activities. I would appeal to everyone to co-operate with Gandhiji in his present endeavour."

On January 13, Gandhi reached Shahapur village and the next day he arrived in Bhatialpur. Performing the duties of a priest, he reinstalled the family deity of Radha Krishna in the household shrine of the host.

Some Muslim youths at Bhatialpur asked him what his objection was to the setting up of a separate Muslim state after the events in Bihar.

Gandhi said he had no objection to the setting up of a separate Muslim state. In fact, Bengal was so. But the question was: what was going to be the character of such a separate Muslim state. That had not been made clear so far, and if a Muslim state implied freedom to make hostile treaties with foreign powers to the detriment of the country as a whole, then that could not be a matter for agreement. He thought that no one could be asked to sign an agreement granting liberty to others to launch hostilities against him.

Asked as to whether he did not consider it advisable to concede Pakistan, since it was holding back the issue of Indian independence, Gandhi replied: "Only after independence has been won, can there be a question of granting Pakistan. To reverse the process was to invite foreign help. Azadi and Pakistan require the exclusion of all foreign powers. Until and unless India is free, there cannot be any other question." Freedom as envisaged by him was freedom not merely from British rule, but from every foreign rule.

The last question was: Now that there was neither Pakistan nor peace, what would be Gandhi's solution?

Gandhi replied: "That is exactly what I am here for and what I am trying to find out in Noakhali. The moment I find it, I will announce it to the world."

At Narayanpur, on January 15, Gandhi expressed his happiness at having been able to spend another night under the roof of a Muslim host in the course of his walking tour. In spite of the fact that he had been trying hard to reduce the size of his entourage, his efforts in that direction had so far not been very successful. And he was glad that his host had proved equal to the occasion and had not been baffled by the number of his party.

Then he referred to an incident that had occurred a short while ago. The elders of the house wanted him to meet the zenana ladies. He had made an attempt, but without success. It was true that the Hindu women attended the prayer in a large number. In this respect, they were more advanced. But as such, it became their duty to fraternize with their Muslim sisters and rescue them from the thraldom of the purdah. If they neglected this neighbourly duty, there was obviously some defect on their part.

India was aspiring to be free. But if half the population was to remain in a paralysed condition, the type of freedom people would attain could never be perfect. Therefore, he once more appealed to the elders among the audience to examine the effect of the purdah system and do away with it in the shortest possible time. For, in his opinion the system, as he found in his peregrination, was quite contrary to what the Prophet had preached.

A question was put to Gandhi, "Why cannot the apostle of non-violence, the modern Buddha, stop internecine war and blood bath in the country?"

Gandhi acquitted himself from the charge of being the modern Buddha. He was and claimed to be a simple man, having extensive experience at his back, but on that account claimed to be no better than any of the members of the audience. He was an equal servant of both the communities or all communities of India. He wished he had the power to stop internecine war and the consequent blood bath. Buddha or the prophets that followed him had gone the way they went, in order to stop wars. The fact that he could not do so was the proof positive that he had no superior power at his back. It was true that he swore by non-violence and so he had come to Noakhali, in order to test the power of his non-violence. As he had repeatedly said ever since his arrival in Bengal, he had no desire to leave Bengal, unless both the communities showed by their action that they were like blood brothers, living together in perfect peace and amity.

Gandhi also dealt with a question that was raised by some of the Muslims who had seen him before the prayer meeting. They had asked him how he expected friendly relations between the two communities, when the Hindus agitated for the arrest and trial of those who were guilty of murders, arson and loot during the disturbances. He confessed that he did not like the complaints. But he sympathized with the complainants, so long as the wrongdoers avoided arrest and trial, and so long as the Muslim opinion in Noakhali did not insist upon guilty parties disclosing themselves. He would be glad to see Muslim opinion working actively to bring the offenders not before the court of justice, but before the court of public opinion. Let the offenders show contrition and let them return the looted property. Let them also show to those against whom offences were committed that they need fear no molestation, that the days of frenzy were

over. Muslim public opinion should be such as to guarantee that the miscreants would not dare to offend against any individual and only then Hindus could be asked to return safely to their villages. He was sure that such purging before the court of public opinion was infinitely superior to a trial before a court of law. What was wanted was not vengeance but reformation.

Addressing the prayer gathering at Dasgharia on January 16, he said that he had received certain questions from some Muslims while he was at Narayanpur. How could he advise Assam and the Sikhs in the Punjab to stay out of groups, if his aim was Hindu-Muslim unity and how, after this, was it possible for the Muslim League to join the constituent assembly?

He stated there was no "if" about his aim. Hindu-Muslim unity had been his aim from his youth upward, that is, for an unbroken period of sixty years. He saw no contradiction between his aim and his advice to the people of Assam, the Sikhs and, for that matter, the Frontier and those who felt like it, to stay out of the groups or from the constituent assembly. The Cabinet Mission's plan was of a voluntary nature, and no party could be compelled to join the constituent assembly. They had no force to back their resolution or wishes, except the force of public opinion.

He had, therefore, given no advice which should make it impossible for the League to join the constituent assembly. So far as he had read the resolution passed by the A.-I.C.C., the Congress had completely identified itself with the Cabinet Mission's plan.

And he hoped that the Muslim League would join the constituent assembly in which it was open to it to make good its position by an appeal to reason. Otherwise, the constituent assembly, because it was a voluntary organization brought into being by the only party that had force behind it, was like a house of cards. It could only become a solid structure, if it was backed by the opinion of the Indian masses. Staying out by certain provinces or groups could not and should not be a hindrance to the proceedings of the constituent assembly, if it was otherwise good.

He would ask, "Why should Assam be absorbed in Bengal against its will or the Frontier Province or the Sikhs into the Punjab and Sind?" The Congress or the League, as the case might be, should make their programme and their policy intrinsically attractive, so as to appeal to the reason of the recalcitrant province or groups.

The second question put to him was: "Gandhi claimed to be a friend of both the communities, but he had been nursing back his own community for the last two months in Noakhali. What about the Muslims of Bihar, who have lost their all?" Gandhi replied he would say the question ignored facts. He was not "nursing back" his own community. He had no community of his own, except in the sense that he belonged to all communities. His record spoke for itself. He admitted that he was trying to bring comfort to the Hindus of Noakhali, but not at the expense of Muslims. If there was a sick member in his family and he seemed to attend to the sick member, it surely did not mean that he neglected the others.

He had had a repeated insistent advice from the Muslim friends that his place was more in Bihar, where the Muslims were in point of numbers much greater sufferers than the Hindus in Noakhali. He was sorry that he had hitherto failed to make his Muslim critics see that he had sufficiently affected the Hindus of Bihar in favour of the Muslim sufferers. If he listened to his critics against his own better reason and went to Bihar, it was just likely that he might injure the Muslim cause, rather than serve it.

Thus, for instance, he might not find corroboration for the many charges brought against the Bihar Hindus and Bihar Government and, in order to be able to make such a declaration, he had accepted the better course, namely, to advise Bihar ministry that they should jointly with the Bengal Government or by themselves, appoint an impartial commission of inquiry.

At Parkote, on the morning of January 17, he had read a speech delivered by the Qaid-e-Azam on the occasion of the foundation ceremony of a girls' high school by his sister Fatima Jinnah. During the prayer speech in the evening, he translated a portion of that speech in which Jinnah was reported to have said that the Muslims should develop a high sense of responsibility, justice and integrity. Wrong was not to be imitated. If after consulting one's conscience one felt that a contemplated action was wrong, one should never do it, irrespective of any consideration or influence. If people acted up to this rule, no one would be able to prevent them from attaining Pakistan. Commenting upon this, Gandhi said that as there was no question of force here and if Pakistan was going to be established by the sterling qualities of character, everybody would welcome such a state, no matter by what name it was called.

He added that they ought to remember Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's advice and act upto it; for, this was an advice confined not to any particular community but was of universal significance. The qualities which the Qaid-e-Azam had advised people to develop were not combativeness, but a sense of justice and truth; and this implied that whenever justice was at stake, people ought to appeal to reason instead of taking recourse to barbarous methods of settling disputes whether private or public.

A short while before prayer on the 18th, a Muslim approached him and stated that if there was a settlement between Jinnah and him, peace would be established in the country. Gandhi's answer was that he did not maintain illusions and never ascribed to himself any superior powers. He had met Jinnah many times, as they knew, and their meetings had been marked by nothing but friendliness, yet the results were negative, as they all knew.

Gandhi explained that a leader was made by his followers. The leader reflected in a clearer manner the aspirations lying dormant among the masses. This was true not only of India, but of all the world. What he would, therefore, suggest to both the Hindus and Muslims was that they should not look to the Muslim League or the Congress or the Hindu Mahasabha for a solution of their daily problems of life. For that, they should look towards themselves; and if they did that, then their desire for neighbourly peace would be reflected by the leaders. Political institutions might be left to deal with specifically political questions, but how much did they know about the daily needs of individuals? If their neighbour was ailing, would they run to the Congress or the League to ask them what should be done? That was an unthinkable proposition.

On the previous evening, he had quoted Jinnah's advice that women should rapidly be rescued from illiteracy. But, he said that that was not enough. Was the condition of literate men any better for their literacy? Were they not, subject to the passing fashions of the political world? Germany, which had lain so long under Hitler, proved what he meant; as all knew, she was in a sorry plight today. It was not literacy or learning which made a man, but education for real life. What did it matter, if they knew everything but did not know how to live in brotherliness with their neighbours?

And it was not enough that they acquired the art of reading and writing, but it was necessary that they should learn the art of living

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on friendly terms with neighbours. They should rescue the women-folk, who formed half their numbers, from the thraldom of ignorance and superstition. Men should live in co-operation and work for the common good. For this, they should not look up to political parties for direction, but to their own souls or God.

Gandhi said that personally he had addressed himself wholly to that task. He would not leave this part of the country alive, if the work remained unaccomplished. If he succeeded in overcoming the distrust of his Muslim brethren and in establishing the fact that, after all, it was the daily things of life, such as he had mentioned, which mattered most, then its effect would be felt not only in this part of the country, but over the whole of India; and, as such, might even deeply affect the future peace of the world.

On Sunday, January 19th, Gandhi stayed at Atakhora, the thirteenth village in his walking tour programme. He was now about only three miles from the village of Shirandi, where an ashramite, Miss Amtus Salam, was undergoing a fast for the last three weeks for the return of a sacrificial sword to the Hindus. Gandhi changed his usual day of silence from Monday to Sunday, in order to be able to speak to Miss Amtus Salam. He wrote out the following on a few slips of paper:

"Whatever I have been trying to say in these days, is contained in the sayings of the Prophet. The following passages are, therefore, culled for our benefit:

'No man is a true believer, unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself.'

'He who neither worketh for himself nor for others will not receive the reward of God.'

'He is not of me, but a rebel at heart, who when he speaketh, speaketh falsely, who when he promiseth, breaketh his promises and who when trust is reposed in him, faileth in his trust.'

'Muslims are those who perform their trust and fail not in their word and keep their pledge.'

'Whoever is kind to His creatures, God is kind to him.'

'A perfect Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe.'

'The worst of men is a bad learned man, and a good learned man is the best.'

'When a man committeth adultery, *iman* leaveth him.'

'He is not a Momin who committeth adultery or who stealeth or who drinketh liquor, or who plundereth, or who embezzleth; beware, beware.'

'The most excellent jehad is that for the conquest of self.'

'Assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.'

'The manner in which my followers become eunuchs is by fasting and abstinence.'

'Women are the twin halves of men.'

'Learned are those who practise what they know.'

'The most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman.'

'Give your wife good counsel; if she has goodness in her, she will soon take it; leave off idle thinking and do not beat your noble wife like a slave.'"

In his prayer address at Atakhora, he said that certain Muslims had asked him: who is this Muslim woman Amtus Salam who was fasting at Shirandi? Gandhi said that Amtus Salam had been with him for a long time. She was a true Muslim. She always had the Koran with her and she was never without it. She also read the Gita. After giving her noble family connections, he added: "But this pious and noble lady is now on the road to death for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity."

Gandhi reached Shirandi in the morning of January 20. Immediately on his arrival, he went to the bedside of Amtus Salam. She was too weak to speak, as it was her twenty-fourth day of fast. He did not speak, as his silence was to continue till midday. He sat by her side and affectionately took her hand and patted her on her forehead. Her condition was serious.

Gandhi, addressing the Muslims at half past three, dwelt on the need of complete religious toleration and freedom of worship. He made it quite clear that if, in spite of this assurance, the minority community in this area were not given adequate protection in the future by the majority community, he himself might go on fast. He requested them to practise spirit of toleration of others' religions, and stressed on the solemnity of assurance given by them that they would safeguard the interests of the minority community. "Search your heart and give me your honest opinion," he added.

A written assurance in the shape of a document by prominent Muslims was placed before him with the solemn pledge that they would see that peace and tranquillity was maintained in this area.

Gandhi approved of the contents of this document and explained the necessity of such documents. In accordance with his wishes, the signatories to this document elected a president who could be referred to, if needed.

Gandhi then advised Amtus Salam to break her fast. Amidst the chanting of the verses from the Koran by a maulvi, at 9.30 p.m., he himself offered some orange juice to her. After she had broken her fast, he distributed sweets among those present.

He left Shirandi at half past seven in the morning of January 21 for Kethuri, the next village in his tour programme. At the prayer meeting, he referred to on the twenty-five days' fast of Amtus Salam. It was common cause that the sword for which the fast was said to have been undertaken could not, in spite of strenuous and honest effort by many persons, be traced. And if Amtus Salam persisted in wanting the production of the sacrificial sword, she must die. But he had explained to her that that could not be the real object of the fast; it must be a symbol of something behind it. He said that her whole life was devoted to a heart unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. To this end, the signatories had pledged themselves. Naturally, any wilful breach of the promise would implicate him in the pact. On the document being interpreted to Amtus Salam, she broke the fast. Gandhi assured the signatories that he would help to the best of his ability in the matter of preserving the just rights of each community, even as he expected them actively to implement their promise.

The huge gathering at Paniala in the evening of January 22 was not only orderly but was of the largest size so far encountered by him in the course of his tour. There were no less than five thousand people. Only a few weeks ago, the villagers had celebrated an inter-communal dinner in which the Hindus including the untouchables and Muslims had participated. Gandhi had desired to attend that celebration, but it had not been possible. He was happy, therefore, that after all he had been able to visit the village of Paniala. But that was not enough. He would feel happier still, if the Hindus and Muslims succeeded in establishing unity and friendship among themselves. Amtus Salam had undertaken her fast, as they all knew, with the same object. And the assurance that the villagers in her neighbourhood had given to her should go a long way in healing the wound which tore the face of Bengal.

One problem, which had been recently exercising his mind was in connection with the families of those who had lost their all in the course of the disturbances. There were many families which had lost their earning members. The survivors had to be looked after; while the children had to be educated and given adequate protection. And that undoubtedly was the duty of the Government. Both he and they, if they wanted real peace, should look at the question from a broader standpoint. In his opinion, where the wrong was done by some Muslims, reasonable arrangements should be made by the Muslims of the neighbourhood.

The Government would only act through force, while a common citizen would act through persuasion and agreement. Through the establishment of good human relations, citizens should try to tide over the disasters which might overwhelm the social body.

Gandhi then dealt with the questions addressed to him by the Muslim Leaguers:

Question: "You said that the Muslim majority provinces if they so chose, had Pakistan already. What did you mean by this?"

He replied that he fully meant what he had said. Whilst there was an outside power ruling India, there was neither Pakistan nor Hindustan, but bare slavery was their lot. And if anybody maintained that the measure of the provincial autonomy they enjoyed was equal to independence, they were unaware of the contents of independence. It was true that the British power was certain to go. But if they could not patch up their quarrels and indulged in blood baths, a combination of powers was certain to hold them in bondage. Those powers would not tolerate a country so vast as India and so rich in the potential resources to rot away because of internal disturbances. Every country had to live for the rest. The days when they could drag on the frog-in-the-well existence were gone. Even before the Congress had taken up non-violent non-co-operation as the official policy for the whole of India, that is, before 1920, a resolution to that effect was passed in Gujarat. He had said that it was open even to one province to vindicate its position and become wholly independent of British power. Thus supposing that following the prescription, Bengal alone became truly and completely independent, there would be complete Pakistan of his definition in Bengal. Islam was nothing, if it did not spell complete democracy. Therefore, there would be one man, one vote, and one woman, one

vote, irrespective of religion. Naturally, therefore, there would be a true Muslim majority in the province. Had not the Qaid-e-Azam declared that, in Pakistan, the minorities would, if possible, be even better off than the majority? Therefore, there would be no under dog. If Pakistan meant anything more, he did not know, and if it did, so far as he knew, it would make no appeal to his reason.

The second question was: "How your ahimsa worked in Bihar?" Gandhi replied that it did not work at all. It failed miserably. But if the reports received by him from the responsible quarters were to be relied upon, the Bihar Government was making full amends and that the general population in Bihar also had realized the heinousness of the crimes committed by large masses of Biharis in certain parts of that province.

The third question was: "Why are you silent about the eviction of the Bengalis by the Assam Government?" Gandhi replied that he was not deliberately silent. The question was not new for him. When some years ago he went to Assam, he was taken to the very spot where the Muslims from Mymensingh had migrated and had taken possession of vacant lands. He had then given his opinion and held it even now that it was not open to persons to usurp vacant land, wherever it may be, whether in their own province or in another. For him, it was not a Hindu-Muslim question. What he had said was of universal application. If Assam attempted to evict the lawful possessors, it would be guilty of crime against humanity. What he had heard was quite the contrary. But if there was a question of unlawful eviction, the Assam Government would not be above law and it was open also to the Bengal Government to vindicate the position of evicted Bengalis, here happening to be Muslims.

The fourth question was: "What, in your opinion, is the cause of communal riots?" Gandhi said that the riots were due to the idiocy of both the communities.

The fifth question was: "Do you think that you would be successful in bringing peace at Noakhali, without having it at the Centre?" Gandhi retorted that if by the Centre was meant a pact between Jinnah Saheb, the President of the Muslim League, and Acharya Kripalani, President of the Indian National Congress, he certainly held that such a pact was not necessary, in order to bring about harmonious relations between the Hindus and Muslims in Noakhali. And so far as he knew, neither the President of the Congress nor the

President of the Muslim League desired discord between the two. They had their political quarrel. But disturbances in India, whether in Bengal, Bihar or elsewhere, were insensate and hindered political progress. He, therefore, felt that it was open to the Hindus and the Muslims in Noakhali to behave like men and to cultivate peaceful relations among themselves.

The last question was: "Who according to you have saved Hindus and Hindu property in Noakhali? Do you not think that Muslim neighbours saved them?" He replied that the question assumed a subtle pride. What was wanted was the spirit of humility and repentance that there were enough Muslims found in Noakhali, who had lost their heads to the extent of committing loot and arson and murder, and resorting to forcible conversions, etc. If more mischief was not done, God alone was to be thanked, not man. At the same time he was free to confess that be it said to their honour, there were Muslims who afforded protection to Hindus.

Gandhi announced on January 23 at Dalta that the Chowdhuris of the village had decided to give him the plot of ground on which the prayer meeting was now being held. The gift to him carried no meaning beyond this that it was presented for public use, irrespective of caste or party. The further cause for congratulation was that he was accommodated in the house of Rai Mohan Mali. It was a happy conjunction of events that it happened to be Netaji's birthday. And what could be happier than that on this auspicious day the Chowdhuris were actually to make their gift and that a Scheduled Caste friend, Rai Mohan Mali, had chosen to give him habitation? In his opinion, the great and the most lasting act of the Netaji was that he abolished all distinctions of caste and class. Netaji was not a mere Hindu, not a mere Bengali, and he never thought himself to be a Caste Hindu. He was an Indian first and last. What was more, he fired all under him with the same zeal, so that they forgot in his presence all distinctions and acted as one man.

No doubt, there was much else to be credited to Netaji. Thus he had sacrificed a brilliant career for the sake of the country's service. He suffered various imprisonments, twice became President of the Congress and at last by great strategy gave the slip to the guard put over him by the Government of Bengal and by sheer courage and resourcefulness reached Kabul, passed through European countries and finally found himself in Japan, collected from scattered material

an army of brilliant young men drawn from all communities and from all parts of India and dared to give battle to a mighty Government. A lesser man would have succumbed under the trials that he went through; but he in his life verified the saying of Tulsidas that "all becomes right for the brave."

Gandhi ended by saying that the Hindus should progress by forgetting all distinctions of caste, and both the communities should develop unity of heart. He was reminded of a saying of the Prophet that a man would be judged on the Day of Judgement not by what he professed by his lips, nor by whom he followed, but by what he had himself done to implement the teachings received by him.

At Muraim, on January 24, Gandhi was put up in the house of Habibullah Patwari. At the prayer gathering, he began by saying that he felt much pleasure in being housed in a Muslim house. The Muslim friends went so far as to find an open space large enough to hold the largest number of visitors possible. And it so happened that the meeting was the largest of all during his tour. He attributed the increasing largeness of the meeting to the fast of Amtus Salam. Whether his inference was justified or not, he flattered himself with the belief he had expressed.

He was sorry that there was poison administered to the public by some of the newspapers. Newspapers today had almost replaced the Bible, the Koran, the Gita and the other religious scriptures. It was wrong, but the fact had to be faced. Such being the case, he held it to be the duty of the newspapermen to give nothing but facts to their readers.

He was also of the opinion that the movement of the minorities to the majority provinces was an impracticable proposition. He knew the time when the late two Imam brothers and the late Mazharal Huq led both the communities, and the leading Hindus, such as the late Brajkishore Prasad and Babu Rajendra Prasad, gladly worked under them. The Muslims of that Bihar must not leave Bihar. It was true that some Bihar Hindus had acted inhumanly but that aberration ought not to deflect the Muslims from their clear duty bravely to stick to their homes, which were theirs by right. And the Bihari Hindus had to make all possible amends for the misdeeds of the Hindus who had become insane. Similarly, he would say to the Hindus and Muslims of Noakhali. It was, therefore, a good omen that there were Muslims in the village to harbour him. It was their

duty to make even a solitary Hindu absolutely safe in their midst and Hindus should have faith enough to stay in Noakhali.

Representatives of the Krishak Samiti and the Hasnabad Peoples' Relief Committee met him at Muraim and informed him about the way in which the Hindus and the Muslims of Hasnabad raised a volunteer corps of about twelve hundred strong to defend the area from an onslaught of communal riots. The interviewers told him of a food crisis developing in this area and asked him if he would say something about it in his speeches, so as to draw the attention of the Bengal Government.

He said: "Though I am not saying anything about the coming food crisis, I am aware of the situation. I am trying to solve it in my own way. I do not see why the people should depend upon the Government or other agencies for help. We hear nowadays people trying to secure foodstuffs from the foreign countries. As a matter of fact, if people will help themselves, then the Government is bound to move and this is what I will call real democracy, which is built up from below. Bengal possesses rich lands. They can produce many edible roots. But again it is difficult to induce people to revise their tastes and old habits. Look at these coconut trees. Coconut makes a good nutritious food. I am trying to accustom myself to it. Of course, I extract the oil from it, and the remaining portion, as you know, contains good protein. Then take the many kinds of roots in the soil of Bengal which belong to the potato tribe and these can be used as good food. Then again, you have an abundance of fish. Fish, coconuts and these roots can easily take the place of rice."

Incidentally, he mentioned the general supineness of the people. As an instance, he mentioned water hyacinth which, if the people *en masse* volunteered their services for a week without any aid from the Government, they could get rid of within a week's time, causing a saving of thousands of rupees.

Gandhi was asked, "Can we not build up Hindu-Muslim unity through a concrete political programme?" He replied: "Probably, you can. But I have got my own ways. And I think if people help themselves, then politics will take care of themselves."

In the prayer meeting at Hirapur on January 25, he alluded to the two telegrams received from Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam in Madras and in Bombay, complaining that he an unbeliever had no right of interference in the Islamic law. He submitted that these telegrams

were based on ignorance of facts. He had not interfered at all in the practice of religion. He had neither the right, nor the wish to do so. All he had done was to tender advice and that based on his reading of the Prophet's saying. And what was more, he had observed in many cultured Muslim families total disregard of the purdah, as it is observed today. But that did not signify less observance of the purdah of the heart, which was the reality, in his opinion, aimed at by Islam. Whatever it was, it was open to the Muslim hearers to reject his advice, if they felt that it was in conflict with the tenets of Islam. The telegrams received by him betrayed a grave intolerance of other opinion than that of the critics. Let them not forget that the courts of law, including the Privy Council, which were often composed of non-Muslims, interpreted the Islamic law and imposed its interpretation on the Islamic world. He, on the contrary, sought merely to give an opinion. And if he could not do so, for the fear of criticism or even physical punishment, he would be an unworthy representative of non-violence and truth.

The day of prayer meeting at Bansa being Independence Day, Gandhi briefly traced the history of the independence movement. Lakhs of people had taken part in the movement. If the fates were not against India, and if India was not divided within, the present meeting would have seen the tricolour flag proudly flying in their midst. But he asked his friends not to fly it, as they were divided now amongst themselves. It was a flag that belonged to the whole of India. But today, unfortunately, their Muslim brethren did not take pride in it. They even resented it. He would not flaunt the flag in their face. The fruit was almost within their grasp. But if they were foolish, then they would let it slip out of their hands. Not even the constituent assembly would be able to vindicate independence, if ultimately all Indians did not wish and were not prepared to fight for independence. It was true, that even one province would seize independence. He had in mind the independence of the whole of India. He, therefore, hoped that the whole of India with one mind would yearn and work for independence.

In a written speech at Palla, on Monday the 27th, he expressed his happiness at having been accommodated in the house of a weaver. He said that the cottages of Bengal had become dearer to him than the prison-like solid walls of palaces. A house full of love, such as this one, was superior to a palace where love did not reign.

The hut in which he had been accommodated for the day was full of light and air, and nature's abundance was showered on the country all around. What, however, made him sad in such a fair and potentially rich country was that the Hindus and Muslims should have brought themselves into hostile relation with one another. He asked, should the differences in religion be sufficient to over-shadow our common humanity? He prayed that these fundamental common senses reassert themselves, so that all contrary forces might be over-powered in the end.

In his pilgrimage, he had come across homes which lay ruined and desolate, and bazaars and schools which lay empty; and he also had found the members of the two communities in a state of non-co-operation with one another. Whom did all this profit, the Hindu or the Muslim? Agriculture had not been properly attended to and the spectre of famine lay waiting in the offing; the villages were dirty, the water unclean; and only a new and extensive scheme of education could raise people from their slumber of ages. He prayed that God might give both the Hindus and the Muslims intelligence and strength enough to grapple with these problems. He thought that if they succeeded in their attempt to solve all these common problems without troubling the Government, it would go a long way to over-power the forces of disruption evident today.

At Chatkhil on January 28, he referred to the pleasurable fact, as he called it, that he was taken that morning, during his walk, to one Hindu *badi* and two Muslim *badis*. Of these, he had no previous knowledge, but he was solicitous for friendship of the heart and when he saw friendly eyes he readily went to the *badis*.

They were anxious for him to take something. He said that was not his time for eating; but they could send the fruit with him and he would take it with pleasure. His grand-daughter, Manu, who was with him, went to the *zenana*. The womenfolk met her with affection and an old lady embraced her, when she came to know who she was. Then in one *badi*, they asked her to take the *roti* and the fish they were cooking. The poor girl replied that she could not take fish, but she could certainly take the *chapati*, but she wanted to be excused as it was too early for her. But the womenfolk suspected pollution. When Manu realized the suspicion, she readily took a morsel much to their relief. For him or his, there was no caste and no restriction as to inter-dining. But he would request his Muslim friends to be

tolerant of Hindus who believed in pollution. He admitted that it was wrong. But after all, real affection was not to be tested through inter-dining, etc. The error was bound to go in time. Much headway had already been made. Meanwhile, wherever they saw real friendship, there should be appreciation. Thus and thus only would they come together and live as perfect friends. In this connection, he instanced an event he had noticed on 26th January. The pressmen with him had arranged a simple meal between the Hindus, the Muslims and the others. The Muslims did not come, but the poor man, whose hut they were occupying, said that they should not press him to join the dinner. For he argued that the event might land him into trouble. When they were gone, he might be invited to embrace Islam. He saw the force of the fear and advised the pressmen not to have this dinner on his precincts.

He would strive for the day, when the Hindus and Muslims would be able to shed their respective weaknesses and come closer to one another in heart. He did not know when the consummation would take place, but he was prepared to lay down his life for the purpose, if need be. He asked the audience to join him in his prayer to God that the day might come soon.

Addressing the prayer meeting at Joyag on January 29, Gandhi dealt with one question which was raised by some Muslims. Did he want the Muslims to attend his prayer meetings? The reply was that he wanted neither the Muslims nor the Hindus to attend the prayer meetings. If the questioner meant to ask whether he would like the Muslims to attend such prayer meetings, he had no hesitation in saying that he would certainly like them to attend. And what was more, numerous Muslims had attended his prayer meetings which had gone on for years. The next question was whether he did not consider it wrong for him, a non-Muslim, to recite anything from the Koran or to couple Rama and Krishna with Rahim and Karim. They said it offended the Muslim ears. He replied that the objection gave him a painful surprise. He thought that the objection betrayed narrowness of mind. They should know that he had introduced the recital from the Koran through Bibi Raihana Tyabji, a devoted Muslim with a religious mind. She had no political motive behind the proposal. He was no *avatar*, as was suggested. He only claimed to be a man of God, humbler than the humblest man or woman. His object ever was to make Muslims better Muslims, Hindus better Hindus, Christians

better Christians, Parsis better Parsis. He never invited anybody to change his religion. He had thought, therefore, that the questioners would be glad to find that his religion was so expansive, as to include readings from the religious scriptures of the world.

Some friends had suggested that all prosecutions, initiated by the Hindus against Muslim offenders, interfered with the progress of the peace mission between the two. It surprised him. What had peace between gentlemen to do with the prosecution of criminals. He could understand the objection, if it meant that false prosecutions should be withdrawn. He would be whole-heartedly with the objectors. He went further and said that all such persons should be brought to book as perjurers. In his opinion, the proper course to avoid court procedure was for the guilty persons in all humility to make open confession of their guilt and stand the judgement of the public. He would gladly help any such movement.

The third thing was that young men who had gone to Calcutta and other places in search of a career were bound to give a portion of their time to the villages. The easiest thing for them to do would be to meet among themselves and make an arrangement by which, say, half of them would take leave from office and serve for a stipulated number of months, at the end of which their place would be taken by the next batch. If they had a will, there would be surely some way for serving the cause of the villagers. Those who did not find it possible to offer personal service might help by cash.

Gandhi ended by citing the example of England, Russia and the other countries, where every family had sent as many able-bodied men and women as possible for the defence of their country. This was how unity of heart was actually achieved in the world and he hoped that we in our country would be able to rise above all small selfish considerations and create that unity without which life itself would not be worth living.

On January 30, at Amki, he began by apologizing for a fifteen minutes' delay. It was due to his being occupied with Zaman Saheb and Yusuf Saheb. These officers took him to a model cottage they had had erected. It was a good house, but, in his opinion, unfit for human habitation in the Indian climate. Such a house could well be described as a box. The inmates would be baked as in an oven and would be suffocated when they closed the doors and windows, as had become their habit. He, therefore, suggested comfortable

cottages of bamboo, straw and thatch. Such cottages will be airy, cool and artistic in the Indian setting, specially in the midst of stately palms of coconut and betelnut.

He was also pleased, when these officers informed him that the refugees had commenced to return from the places where they had taken refuge. He hoped that this return now would continue with unabated zeal. He was of opinion that the people should dismiss all fear from their minds and feel safe in the midst of their countrymen, whether Hindu or Muslim. When they learnt to fear their Maker alone, they would cease to fear their fellows. They would find that there were no people to frighten them, if they were not afraid themselves. This had been his uniform experience in the course of the last sixty years of his life.

The third question taken up by him was in connection with the fishermen who had met him on the previous evening. They had complained that in this country where fishing was confined to privately owned ponds for the major part of the year, it was impossible for them to live, if they were boycotted by the majority community. Gandhi expressed his surprise at this state of affairs and suggested that unless the Hindus and Muslims could rise above their present political differences and reassert their common humanity and common brotherhood, life would become an impossibility, where nature had designed otherwise. He hoped, therefore, that the alleged conditions would be corrected by joint efforts of the people concerned and real peace restored in the country-side.

In his speech at Navagram on January 31, he congratulated the audience, which was exceptionally large, on the perfect quiet they observed throughout the prayer. He then referred to the two communications he had received from Muslim writers who consoled him against his critics who had questioned his right to speak about the purdah or other things pertaining to Islam. These writers held by quoting from the Koran that it was broad-based and it was exceptionally tolerant. It welcomed criticism and invited the world to study the Koran. One of them also held that no group or nation had remained without a prophet or a teacher. He mentioned these communications to show that all Muslims did not hold what he considered to be intolerant views. He hoped too that the audience which contained a large number of Muslims would appreciate the testimony of the two writers who did not appear to be biased.

The prayer meeting at Amishapara, on February 1, eclipsed all the previous ones in point of numbers, both Muslims and Hindus. The previous evening, one maulvi wanted to speak for a short time. Gandhi had sensed what he wanted to speak. He, therefore, contrary to wont allowed him to speak for five minutes which he wanted by the watch. The maulvi resented Gandhi's remark on purdah system. He had no right to speak on the Islamic Law. Gandhi thought this was a narrow view of religion. He claimed the right to study and interpret the message of Islam. The maulvi further resented coupling of the name of Rama, a mere young king, with Rahim, the name of God, similarly of Krishna with Karim. Gandhi said this was a narrow view of Islam. Islam was not a creed to be preserved in a box. It was open to mankind to examine it and accept or reject its tenets. He hoped that this narrow view was not shared by Muslims of Bengal or rather India.

In this connection, Gandhi wanted to draw the attention of the audience to the work Dr. Sushila Nayyar was doing in Changirgaon. She wanted to go to Sevagram to attend to the hospital for whose management she was responsible, but her Muslim patients would not let her go, till they were restored to health. She had also mentioned that in the village, the partakers of the loot of October last were of their own accord bringing back some of the looted property. He was of the opinion that this was a happy omen. If the infection spread, the law courts could have no work to do, so far as public loot was concerned. He for one would ask the Government to waive the right of prosecution, if the looted property was returned. But he said the return must be sincere and full, whether by the guilty one or by the public, and not a mere token to avoid prosecution. What he aimed at was a change of heart and not a truce superimposed by the military or the police. A popular ministry could not impose its will on the people.

Gandhi then answered the following question:

"You have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up the private ownership in their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of the law and managed democratically? How will then the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise?"

In answer, Gandhi said that he adhered to the position taken by him years ago that everything belonged to God and was from God.

Therefore, it was for His people as a whole, and not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion, he became a trustee of that portion for God's people.

God, who was all-powerful, had no need to store. God created from day to day; hence, men also should in theory live from day to day and should not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized, and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. And he wished it became a gift from India to the whole world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and in other countries for white men, and their posterity. In these distinctions lay the seed of a war, more virulent than the last two wars. As to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor, subject to the legal sanction.

In the course of a long discourse that day, Gandhi referred to "an integral part of *yajna*", which he was performing. He said that he was in the midst of so much suspicion and distrust, that he did not want his innocent acts to be misrepresented. He had his grand-daughter with him. She shared the same bed with him. The Prophet had discounted the eunuchs, who became such by an operation. He welcomed the eunuchs made such through prayer by God. His was that aspiration. It was in the spirit of God's eunuch that he had approached what he considered his duty. And he invited them to bless the effort.

On February 2, at Satgharia, Gandhi in his written speech deliberately referred to his private life, because he had never thought the private life of the individuals did not affect the course of the public activities of those individuals. Thus, he did not believe that he could be immoral in private life and yet be an efficient public servant. His public conduct was bound to be affected by his private life. He held that much mischief was made throughout the world by divorce between the public and private conduct. And when he was engaged in the supreme test of non-violence in his life, he wished to be judged before God and man by the sum-total of his activities, both private and public. As he had said years ago, non-violent life was an act of self-examination and self-purification, whether by the individual, group or a nation.

This led Gandhi to answer some questions addressed to him and arising out of his remarks on trusteeship.

Question: "Is it possible to defend by means of non-violence anything which can only be gained through violence?"

Gandhi: "It follows from what I have said above that what is gained by violence cannot only not be defended by non-violence, but the latter requires the abandonment of the ill-gotten gains."

Question: "Is the accumulation of capital possible except through violence, whether open or tacit?"

Gandhi: "Such an accumulation by private persons is impossible except through violent means, but accumulation by state in a non-violent society is not only possible, it is desirable and inevitable."

Question: "Whether a person accumulates material wealth or moral wealth, he does so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Has he then the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage?"

Gandhi: "The answer is an emphatic no."

Question: "How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization being vested in the state?"

Gandhi: "As I have said yesterday, choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the state. Such arrangement puts a check on the state, as well as the individual."

Question: "When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the state, which is an instrument of violence, or in associations of voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may, of course, derive their final authority from state-made laws?"

Gandhi: "That question involves some confusion of thought. The legal ownership in the transformed condition vests in the trustee, and not in the state. It is to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of the trusteeship comes into play, retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor do I hold that the state must always be based on violence. It may be so in theory, but the practice of the theory demands a state which would for the most part be based on non-violence."

The first part of Gandhi's tour on foot which began at Srirampur village ended on the morning of February 3, when he reached the village of Sadhurkhil. The second part of the walking programme was to

commence on February 5. During this part of the tour, Gandhi was again to cover one village every day, but at Sadhurkhil and three other villages he intended to halt for a couple of days, instead of one, as at all others.

Addressing the prayer meeting at Sadhurkhil on February 3, he referred to the resolution passed by the Muslim League on the constituent assembly. It considered the Congress resolution to be dishonest and did not mean what it said. It was said that the elections and the other dealings of the assembly were illegal. He pleaded that there should be no imputation of dishonesty by one party to the other. It was not good for the great organizations which they both were. There was no reason why they should regard them as enemies, one of the other. That practice would not lead them to independence. If the elections and the proceedings were illegal, their legality should be challenged in a court of law. Otherwise, the charge had no meaning. If they did not wish to recognize the courts, as he did in 1920 and later, then the talk of illegality should cease. He would plead with the Muslim League that they should go into the constituent assembly and state their case and influence the proceedings. But if they did not, he would advise them to test the sincerity of the assembly and see how it dealt with the Muslim problem. It was due to themselves and the rest of the country, unless they wanted to rely upon the law of the sword, which he was sure they did not wish to do. Then the League had said that the constituent assembly represented only the Caste Hindus. Surely, there were in the assembly the Scheduled Classes, the Christians, the Parsis, the Anglo-Indians and all those who considered themselves the sons of India. Then Dr. Ambedkar was good enough to attend the constituent assembly, not to mention the other large number of Scheduled Classes. The Sikhs too were still there. It was open to the Muslim League to put up their fight within the assembly.

As to the British Government who, as the Muslim League contended, should dismiss the constituent assembly, he entertained the hope, though he admitted it was somewhat shaken, that they would honestly carry to the end the voluntary document. He submitted that the British was bound to act according to the state paper, even if a few provinces chose to establish their independence in accordance with the paper. He hoped that the British would not forfeit all credit for honest dealing with India.

Gandhi concluded by saying that whilst he felt obliged to refer to the League politics, he warned the audience against inferring that the Hindus and the Muslims were to regard one another as enemies. The Muslim League had made no such announcement. Let the political quarrel be confined to the politicians at the top. It would be a disaster, if the quarrel permeated the villages. The way to Indian independence lay not through the sword, but through the mutual friendship and adjustment. He was in Noakhali to show what real Pakistan could mean. Bengal was the one province in India, where it could be demonstrated. Bengal had produced talented Hindus and talented Muslims. Bengal had contributed largely to the national struggle. It was in the fitness of things that Bengal should now show how the Muslims and the Hindus could live together as friends and brothers. Then there would be no reason for Bengal to remain a deficit province. It ought to be a province of plenty.

The next day, prayer was held by special invitation in the *badi* of Salimulla Saheb, an influential Muslim in Sadhurkhil. He was agreeable to the Ramdhun being recited with the clapping of hands.

At the time of Gandhi's speech, some Muslims wished to read an address in Bengali which he said might be read, if it pleased them. It referred to the music before the mosques, cow slaughter, etc. He said that he was not concerned with these questions. They were the questions of law. He wanted to capture their hearts and see them welded into one. If that was attained, everything else would right itself. If their hearts were not united, nothing could be right. Their unfortunate lot would then be slavery. He asked them to accept the slavery of the one omnipotent God, no matter by what name they addressed Him. Then they would bend the knee to no man or men. It was ignorance to say that he coupled Rama, a mere man, with God. He had repeatedly made it clear that his Rama was the same as God. His Rama was before, is present now, and would be for all time. He was unborn and uncreated. Therefore, let them tolerate and respect the different faiths. He was himself an iconoclast, but he had equal regard for the so-called idolaters. Those who worshipped idols also worshipped the same God who was everywhere, even in a clod of earth, even in a nail that was pared off. He had Muslim friends whose names were Rahim, Rahman and Karim. Would he, therefore, join on to the name of God, when he addressed them as Rahim, Karim or Rahman?

Let them beware of the thought that all was well in Noakhali, or the neighbouring parts. If the reports he received were at all true, things had not quite settled down. He did not refer to these things or the destruction that had been wrought, because he did not wish to excite passion. He did not believe in retaliation. He had lived with the Pathans. Badshah Khan, being tired of retaliation which had descended from generation to generation, had learnt the real virtue of non-violence. He did not claim perfection for him. He too could be angered. But he did claim for his friend the wisdom that dictated to him restraint on one's love of vengeance. He wanted the same thing in Noakhali. Unless they sincerely believed that, without the real peace between the communities, there was neither Pakistan nor Hindustan, slavery was their lot.

He had a visit from four young Muslims, who deplored the fact that he had not yet corrected the exaggeration about the number of murders in Noakhali and the adjacent parts. He had not done so, because he did not wish to bring out all that he had seen. But if it at all mended matters, he was free to declare that he had found no evidence to support the figure of a thousand. The figure certainly was much smaller. And he was also free to admit that the murders in number and brutalities in Bihar eclipsed those in Noakhali. But that admission must not mean a call for him to go to Bihar. He did not know that he could render any greater service by going to Bihar than from here. He would not be worth anything, if without conviction he went there at the bidding of anybody else. He would need no prompting, immediately he felt that his place was more in Bihar than in Noakhali. He was where he thought he could render the greatest service to both the communities.

## *Epic Tour Ends*

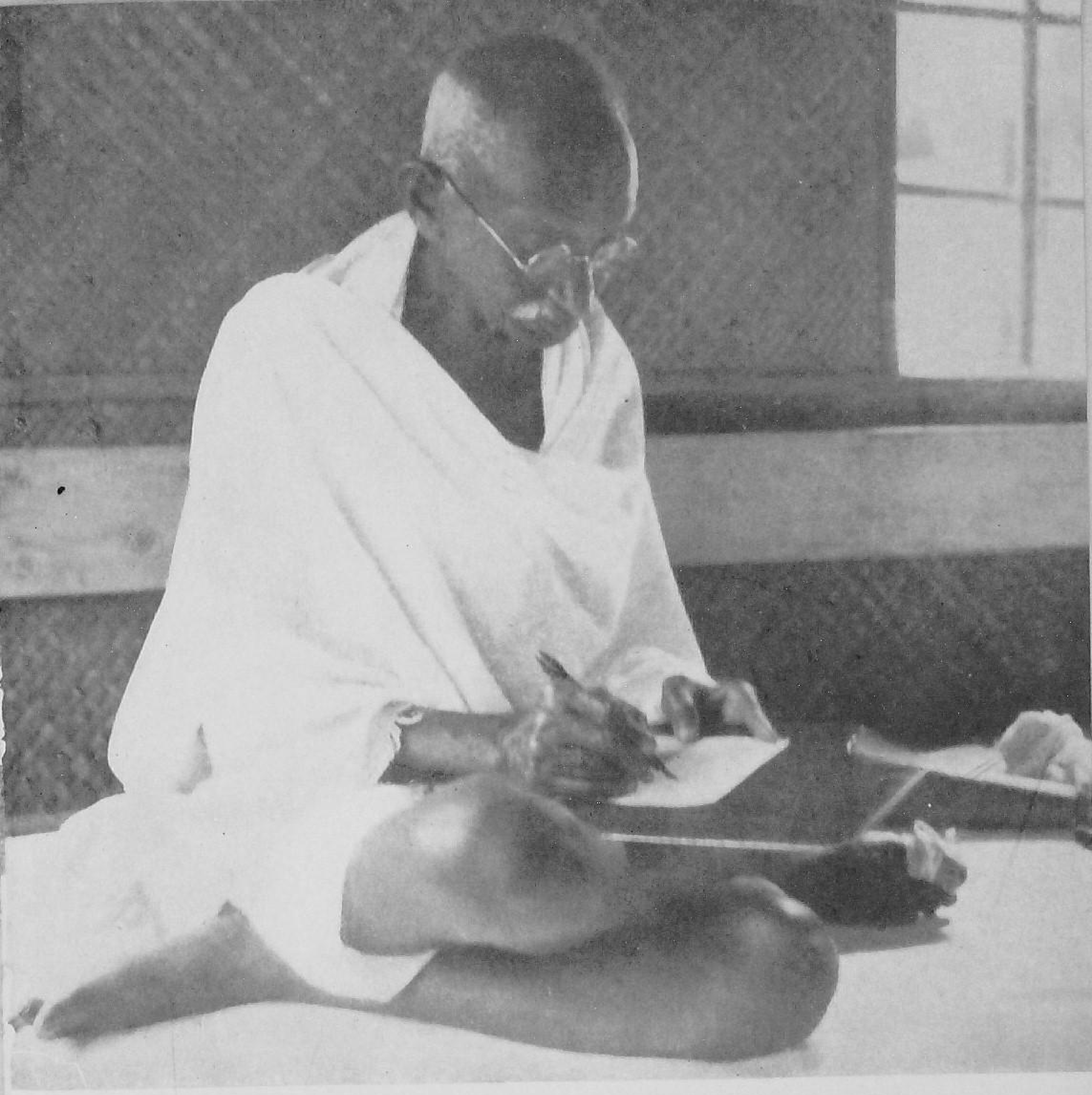
1947

On the morning of February 5, 1947, the second part of Gandhi's tour through the villages of Noakhali commenced. He set out punctually at 7.30 a.m. from Sadhurkhil camp where, for the first time in his twenty-eight days of walking, he had spent two days and two nights at one stretch. He walked to Srinagar by the foot-track made overnight by the volunteers through the paddy fields. He covered a distance of two miles in forty minutes.

It was a huge prayer meeting that Gandhi addressed on the 5th. He began his remarks by asking the volunteers to refrain from providing decorations and an ornamental shade where he sat. He was averse to all these things. It was a waste of money and labour. All that was needed was a raised seat with something clean and soft to rest his fatless and muscleless bones.

Then he dealt with the question, "You have asked the provinces which have the necessary courage to frame their own constitution and then ask the British army to quit their territory, as proof of the attainment of independence. What, in your opinion, should be the basis of the franchise in those free provinces of India?"

His answer was unequivocal. Even one province could frame its own constitution and enforce it, provided that it was backed not by a majority of one but by an overwhelming majority. He held that no power on earth could resist the lovers of liberty who were ready not to kill the opponents, but to be killed by them. This was the view that he had enunciated at one time. But today they had made a considerable progress. He put a favourable interpretation on the Cabinet Mission's state paper. So far as he could see, they could not resist the declared wish of a single province. If that was true of one province, say Bengal, how much more true it was for a number of provinces which the constituent assembly undoubtedly represented? But he was indifferent to what the British Government said so far

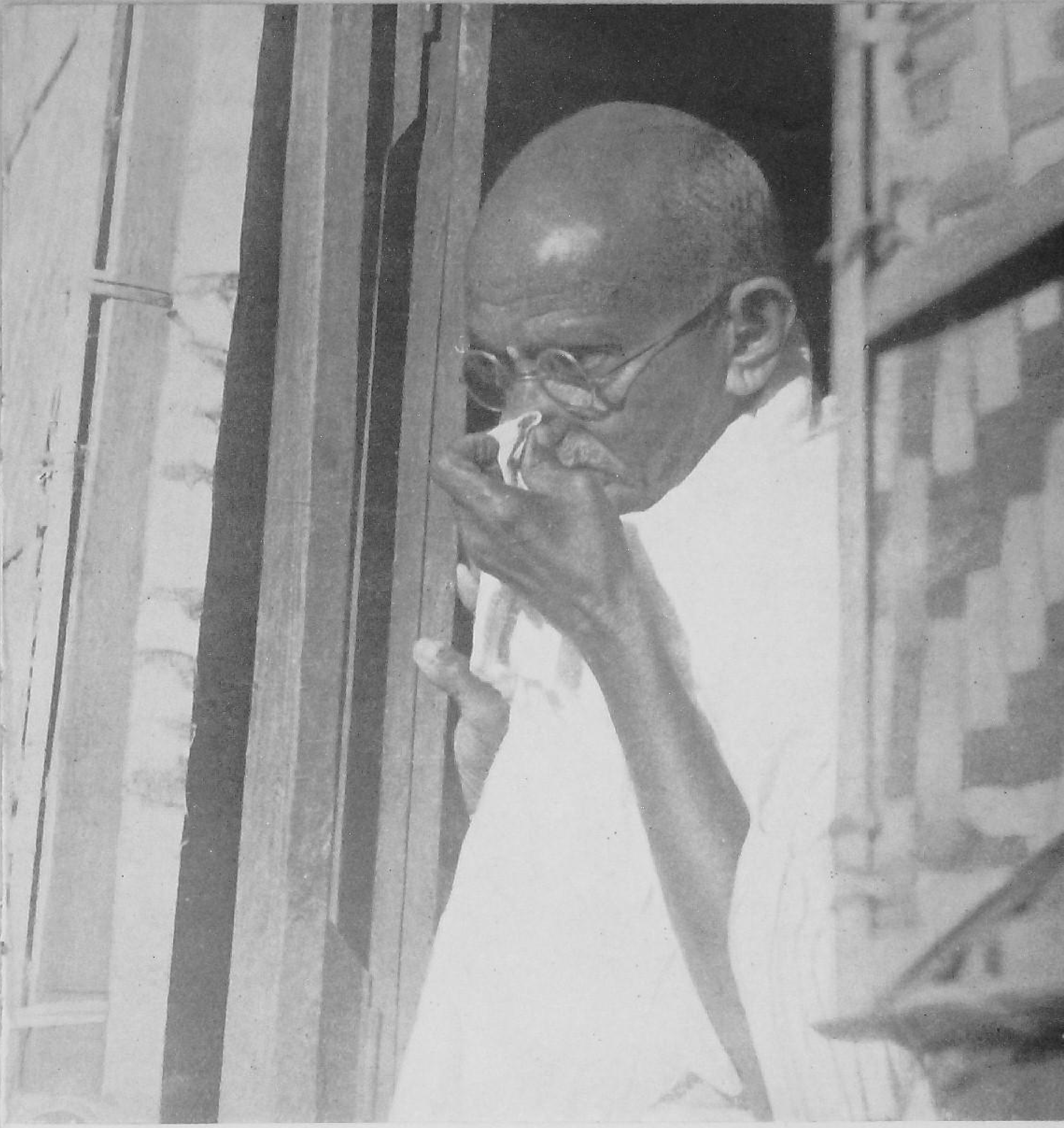


Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

At work in the day's camp during the Noakhali tour, January 1947

Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar

Gandhi greeting the villagers from his hut after short rest in the afternoon



*Photograph : D. G. Tendulkar*

At the door of his hut

*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

Gandhi interviewing the women sufferers of Noakhali

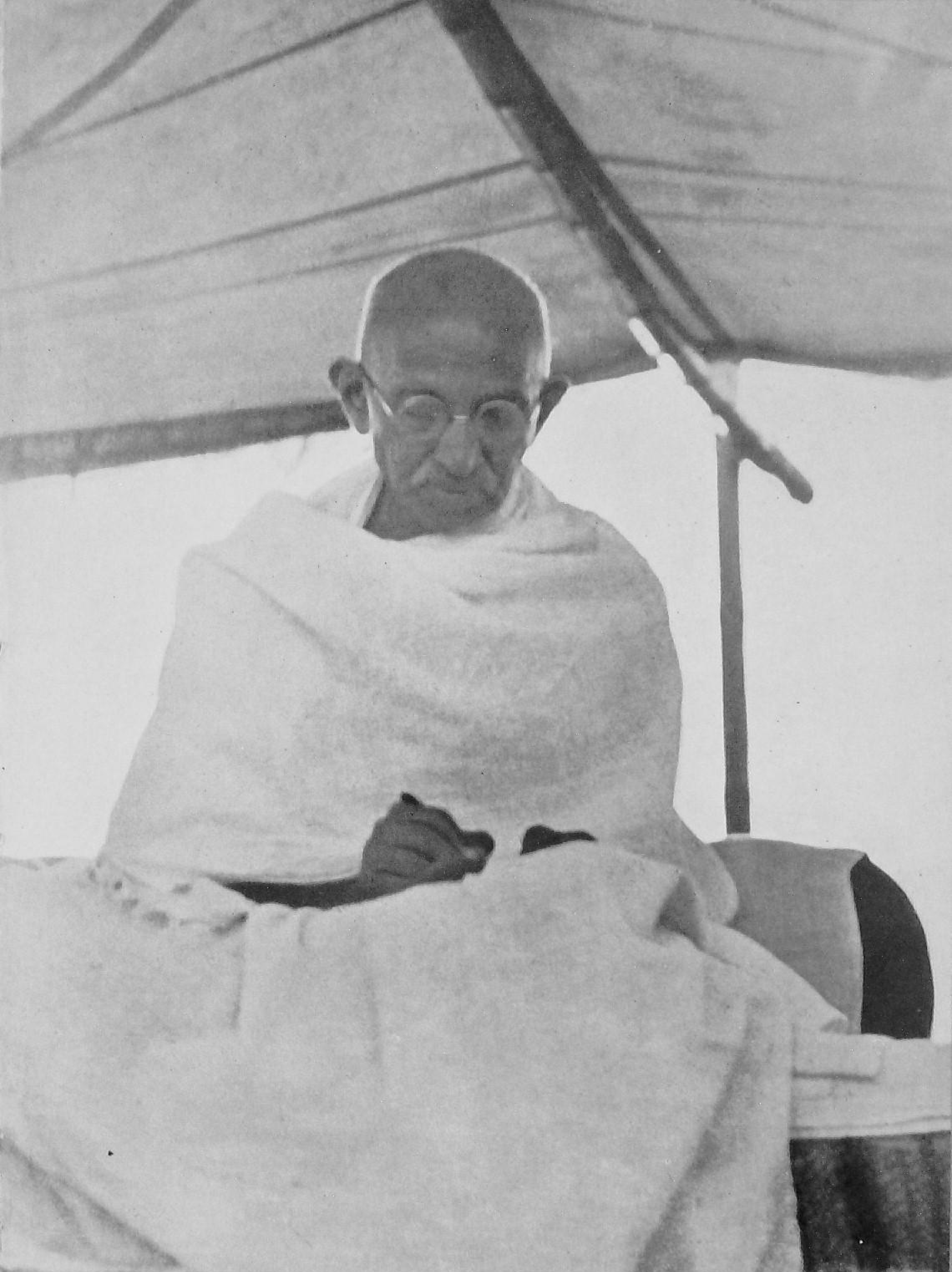
Gandhi having routine mud-pack treatment while listening to the woes of villagers

Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar

At a prayer meeting in a village of Noakhali

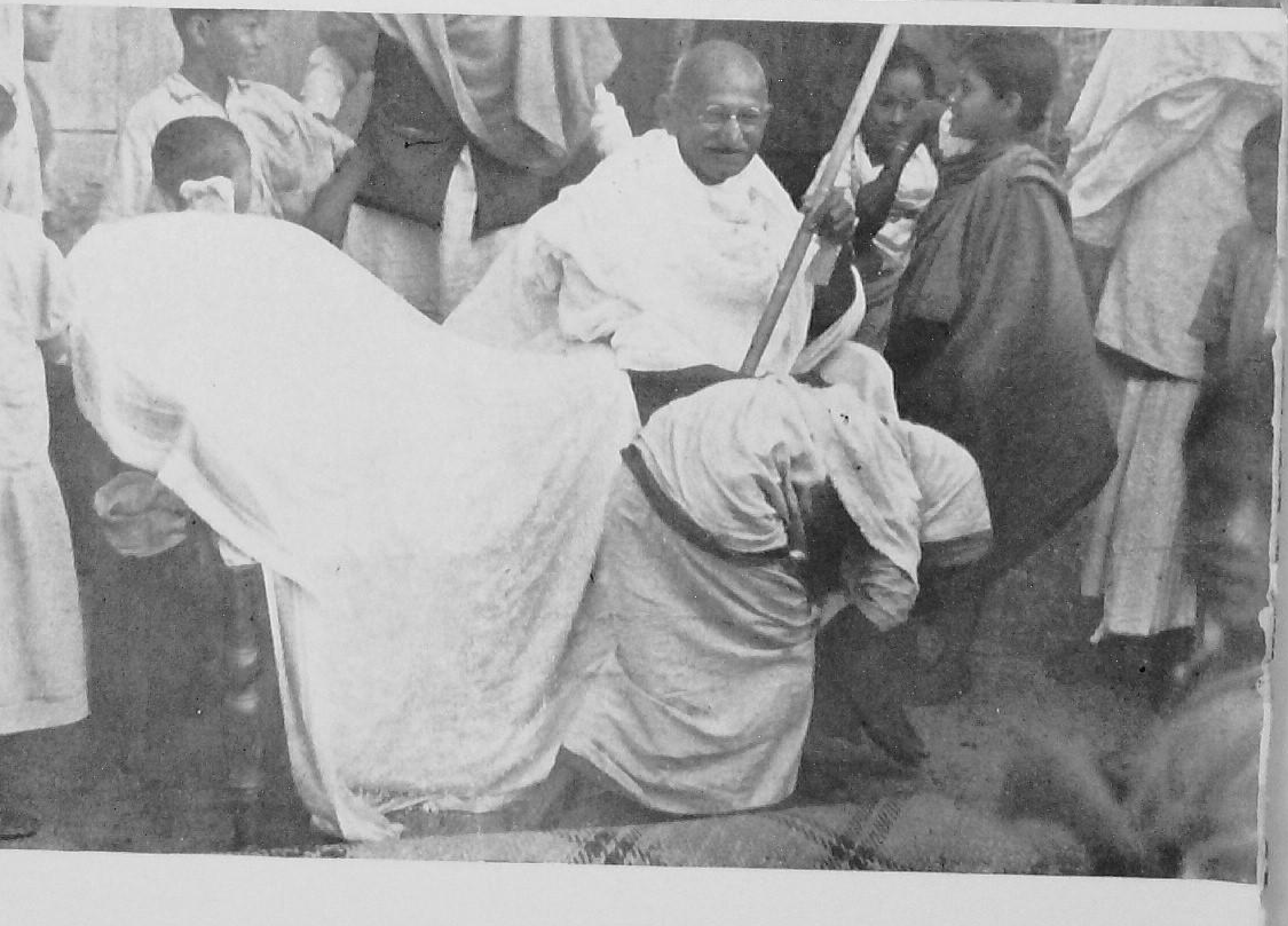
*Photograph : News Photo Flash*

Prof. N. K. Bose interpreting in Bengali Gandhi's prayer speech, Noakhali, January 1947



Photograph : D. G. Tendulkar

Gandhi writing a summary of his speech during the prayer meeting for the press, Noakhali



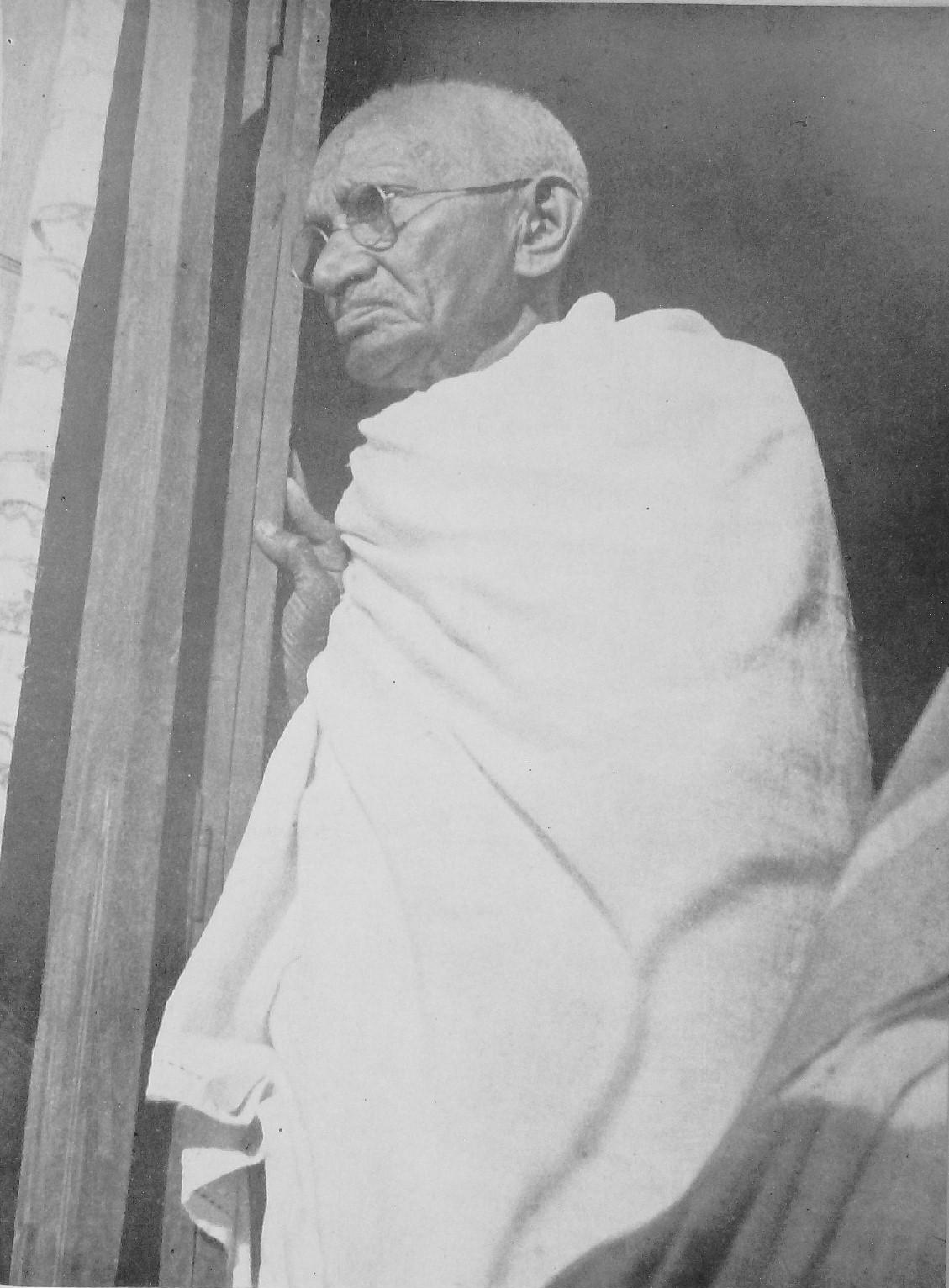
Gandhi amongst the children of a Muslim locality

Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar

during his after-prayer visit to the Noakhali villagers

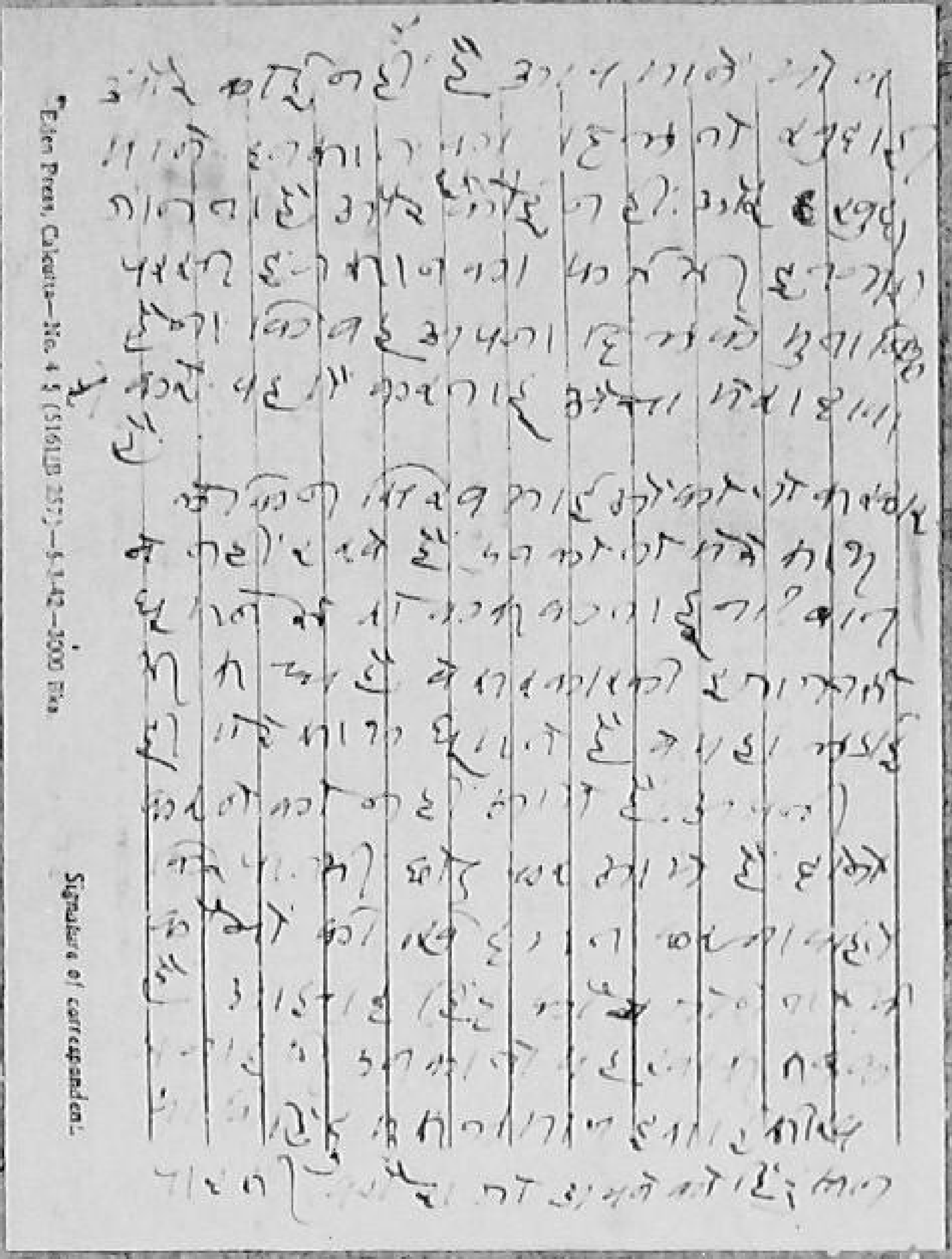
*Photographs : D. G. Tendulkar*

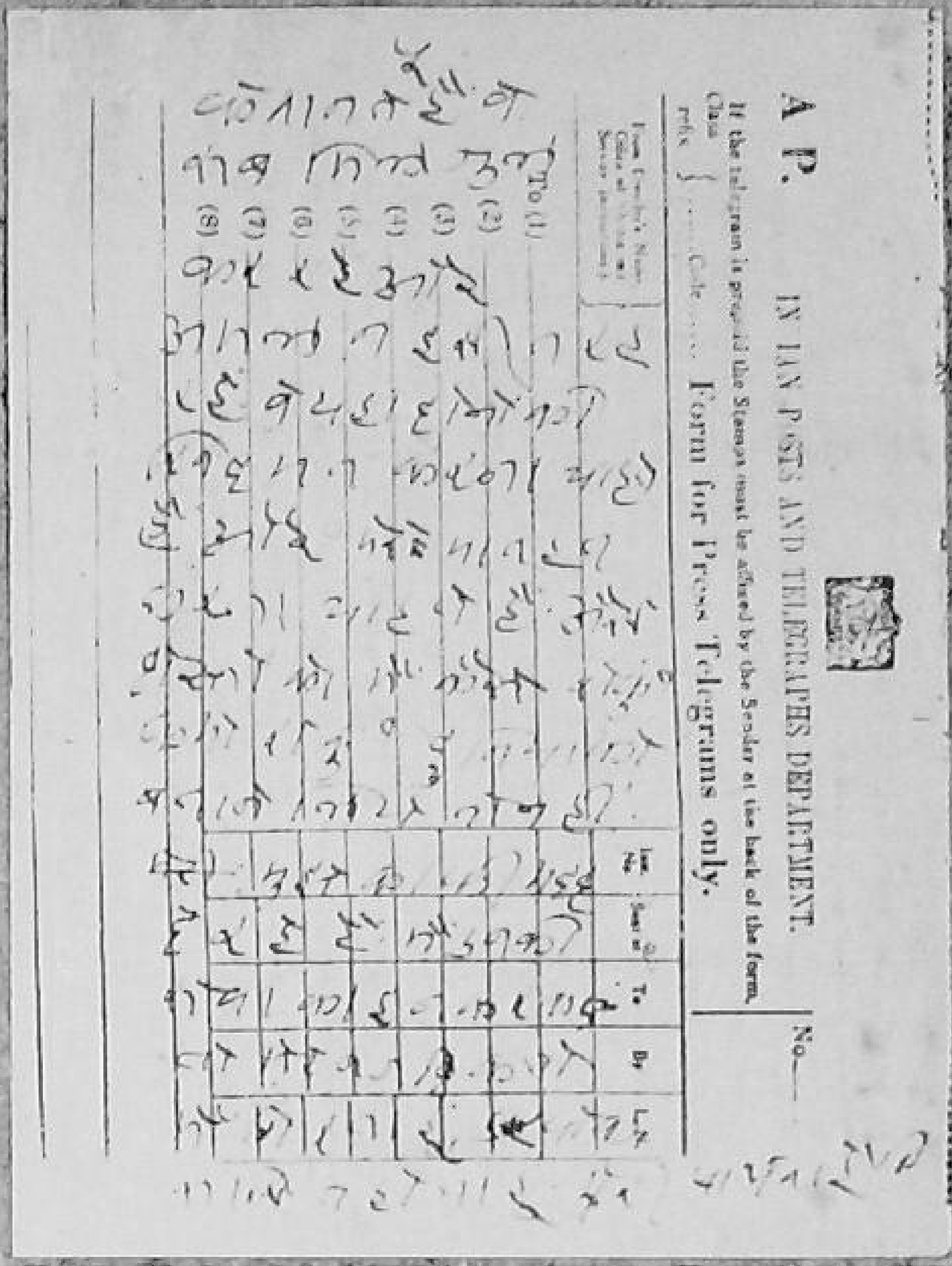
Dislodged Hindu sufferers of Noakhali awaiting Gandhi's visit, January 1947

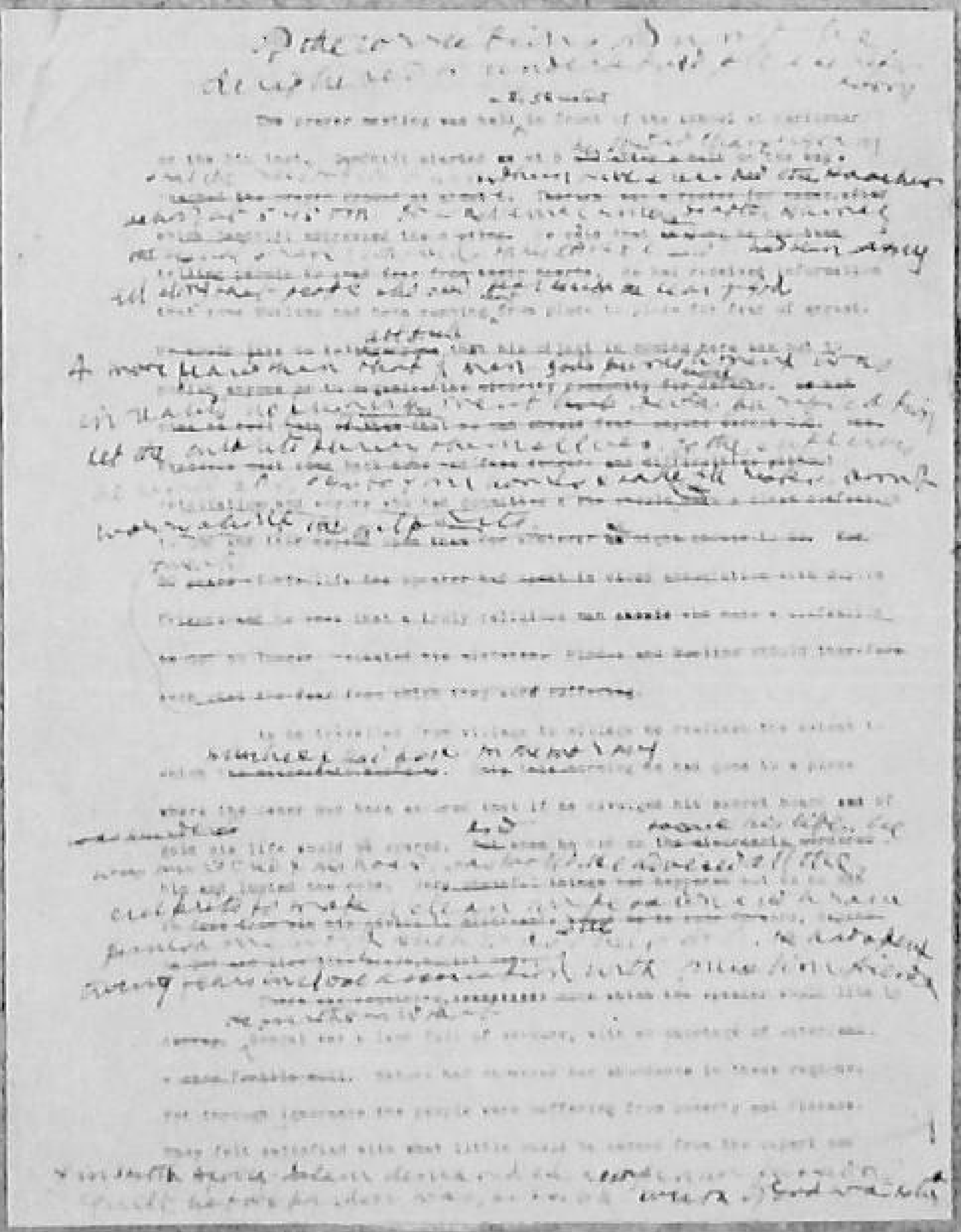


Photograph : D. G. Tendulkar

Gandhi in Noakhali, January 1947





*Courtesy : Prof. N. K. Bose*

Gandhi's report of his own prayer speech in Hindi and English, Noakhali, January 1947

Mahomed Yamin Saheb
Liaison Officer
Punjab Muslim League

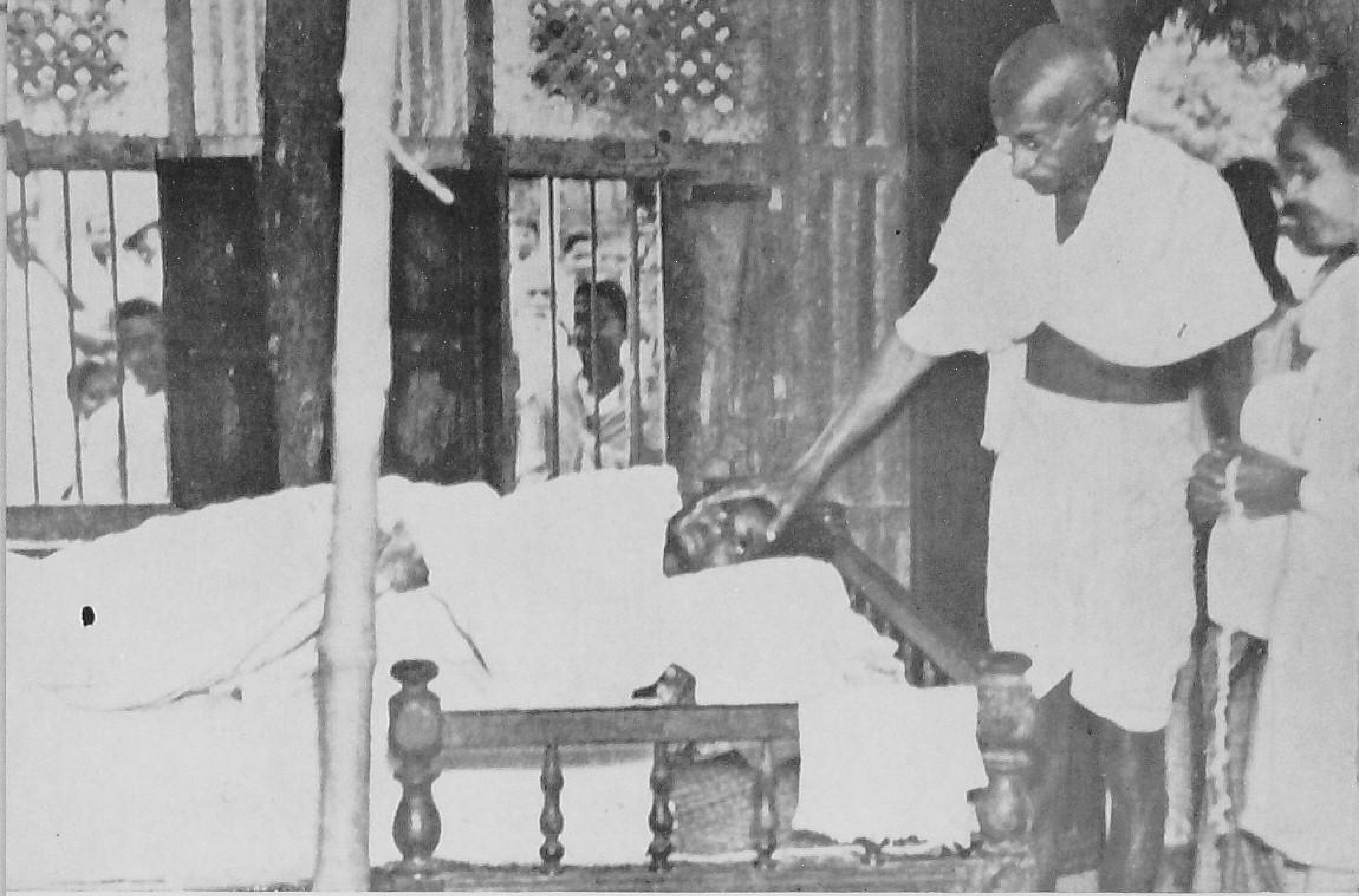
Your wire x Have given no opinion x send me Patrika cuttings x Have minimised no Muslim sufferings x Make no distinctions x Do not yet see my way go Bihar alleviate distress x Feel I do that better from here Gandhi

Tell him in Bengalee that if the complaint is true it should be reported at once to the police. I would send a copy of the letter with permission to make what use I like of it. As it is I am making private use of the letter under reply to find out the facts. If the complaint states the truth, it is undoubtedly bad. The evil must be nipped in the bud.

6.1.47

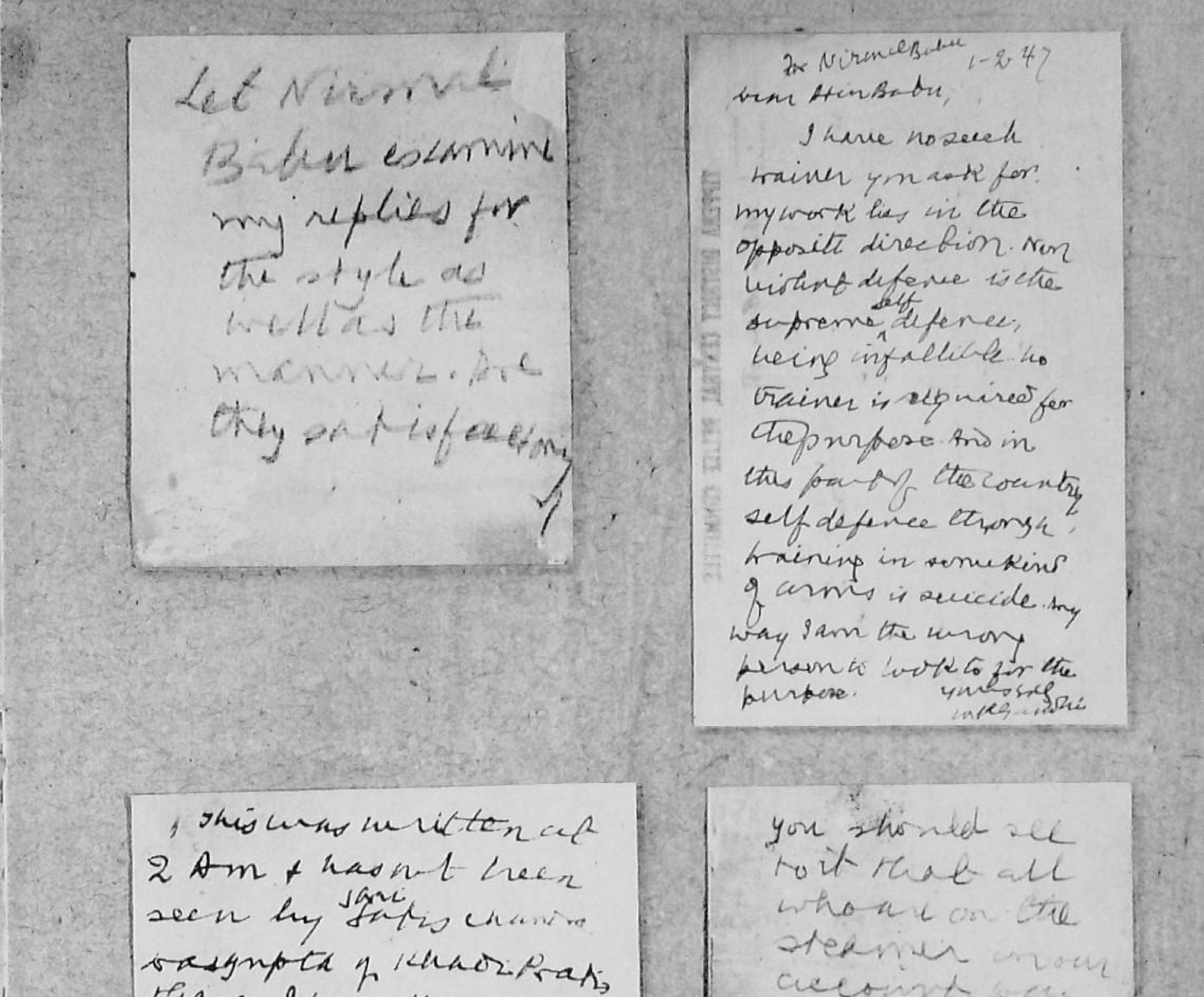
Courtesy: Prof. N. K. Bose

Gandhi's draft of a telegram to Mahomed Yamin Saheb, dated January 4, 1947
Gandhi's instructions to Nirmal Kumar Bose, Noakhali, January 6, 1947



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi's visit to Amtus Salam on the day of her breaking the fast, Shirandi, January 20, 1947


Let Nirmal Babu examine my replies for the style as well as the manner. Are [they] satisfactory?

For Nirmal Babu 1-2-47

Dear Hem Babu,

I have no such trainer you ask for. My work lies in the opposite direction. Non-violent defence is the supreme self defence, being infallible. No trainer is required for the purpose. And in this part of the country self defence through training in some kind of arms is suicide. Any way I am the wrong person to look to for the purpose.

Yours sincerely
M K Gandhi

This was written at 2 AM & has not been seen by Satis Chandra Dasgupta of Khadi Pratisthan. I would suggest your seeing & consulting him, since I am wholly ignorant of local conditions.

X. Insert at place marked

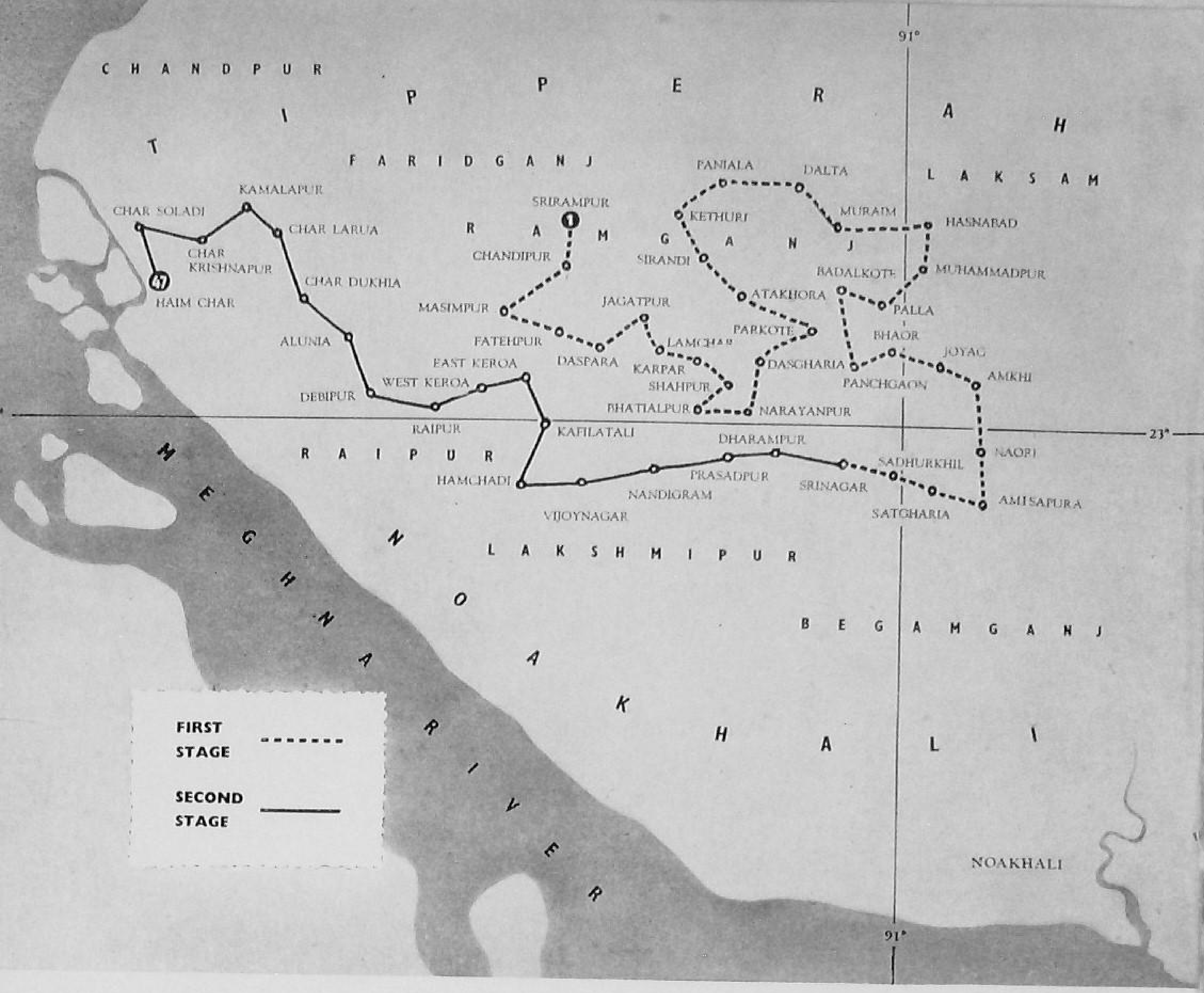
I would suggest that refugees who are not willing or otherwise incapable may be [illegible]

You should see to it that all who are on the steamer on our account pay the legitimate fare [illegible] whether they pay the Government or [illegible] It looks ugly [illegible] all travel free

[illegible]

Courtesy : Prof. N. K. Bose

Gandhi's notes, Noakhali, February 1947




*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Route map of Gandhi's walking tour of 116 miles through 47 villages in the districts of Noakhali and Tipperah, January-March, 1947

as India's independence was concerned. That rested with people and no outside power. Nor was there any question as to what India would do, if the state paper was withdrawn. India had been accustomed to life in the wilderness. When Pandit Nehru and his friends accepted office, he had said that it was not a bed of roses, but a bed of thorns. Their goal was liberty, and liberty they would take no matter what happened.

Naturally, he could speak with confidence, when the people had only non-violence in view, as a steadfast simple policy without reservation. If on the other hand, they thought they could drive away the British by the sword, they were vastly mistaken. They did not know the determination and courage of the British. They would not yield to the power of the sword. But they could not withstand the courage of non-violence, which disdained to deal death against death. He knew no other power higher than non-violence. And if they were still without real independence, it was, he was sure, because the people had not developed sufficient non-violence. Anyway, the state paper, in his opinion, was in answer to the non-violent strength that India had so far developed.

If they contemplated the last war, they would plainly see that whilst the enemy powers so called were crushed, the allied powers had won but an empty victory. Apart from the wanton destruction of the human heads, they had between the allies and the enemies succeeded in draining the world of its food materials and cloth. And the allies seemed to be so much dehumanized, that they entertained the vain hope of reducing the enemies to helotry. It was a question whom to pity more—the allies or the enemies. And, therefore, he asked the people bravely to face the consequence, whatever it was, feeling secure in the confidence born of non-violence, be it as an honest policy.

As to the franchise, Gandhi swore by the franchise of all adults, males and females, above the age of twenty-one or even eighteen. He would bar old men like himself. They were of no use as voters. India and the rest of the world did not belong to those who were on the point of dying. To them belonged death, life to the young. Thus, he would have a bar against persons beyond a certain age, say fifty, as he would against the youngsters below eighteen. Of course, he would debar the lunatics and the loafers. In free India, he could not contemplate communal franchise. It must be a joint electorate,

perhaps, with the reservation of seats. Nor could he contemplate favouritism for anyone, say Muslims, Sikhs or Parsis, for example. If there was to be favouritism, he would single out physical lepers. The lepers were an answer to the crimes of the society. If the moral lepers would ban themselves, then the physical lepers would soon be extinct. And they, poor men, were so frightened of modern society that they put forth no claims. Educate them truly, and they would make ideal citizens. Anyway, side by side with the adult franchise, or even before that, he pleaded for universal education, not necessarily literary, except as perhaps an aid. English education, he was convinced, had starved our minds, enervated them and had never prepared them for brave citizenship. He would give them all sufficient knowledge in the rich languages of which any country would be proud. Education in the understanding of the rights of citizenship was a short term affair, if they were honest and earnest.

On the morning of February 6, Gandhi reached Dharampur, a predominantly Muslim village. Speaking at the prayer gathering, he referred to a letter which he had received from the medical superintendent of Marwari Relief Society. The doctor said that he treated both the Hindus and the Muslims without any distinction. Muslim men and women gladly accepted his services. The doctor had noticed that in this part of the world, the Muslims were very poor. There was dirt and insanitation, wherever he went. Would the speaker say something about it? He would gladly do so. For he had been a lover of cleanliness and sanitation for over fifty years. He had to speak much in disparagement of the West. It was, therefore, a pleasure for him to be able to say that he had learnt the laws of cleanliness from the Englishmen. He was much pained to see the same tanks in Noakhali used for drinking and cleaning purposes. It was wrong. The people thoughtlessly dirtied the streets, the lanes and the footpaths by spitting everywhere and clearing their noses. This was the cause of so many diseases in India. No doubt, their chronic poverty was responsible for the diseases. But their chronic breach of the laws of sanitation was no less responsible. It was surprising that India lived at all. But India was worst in point of high death-rate; America was probably the first in the least. And then those that lived were the specimens of living death. The sooner, therefore, the inhabitants of Noakhali attended to the laws of sanitation, the better for them. Poverty was no bar to perfect sanitation.

Then there was invasion of pressmen from far and near. The expression "press camp" was an attractive expression. But this press camp was in keeping with the village surroundings, and that too with his. His surrounding was inconsistent with pomp. The pressmen who accompanied him were living under difficult conditions. They had to live in such huts as the villagers were able to provide. And they had no unlimited accommodation. He would advise them not to venture out, but be satisfied with the news that the five or six were able to provide. His barefooted walk need not provide any sensation. It ought not to excite people. It was no difficulty for him. The earth of Noakhali was like velvet, and the green grass was a magnificent carpet to walk on. It reminded him of the soft English grass that he had noticed in England. It was wholly unnecessary to wear sandals to be able to walk on the Noakhali earth and grass. He could not probably have done it in Gujarat, and then he inherited the traditions of his motherland. Pilgrimage was always performed barefoot. For him, this tour was a pilgrimage, pure and simple. But that should be no attraction to pressmen and others. He considered it as no strain on him. And if God willed it, He would allow him to pull through it. Let the pressmen save the time and money which latter they could contribute to the Noakhali Relief Fund, or to the never-to-end Harijan Fund.

He then came to the questions put to him.

Question: "Supposing, one or the other of the provinces wishes to declare its independence, what kind of constitution would you advise them to prepare? In 1925, you declared that in free India of your dreams, only those would have voting rights who had contributed by manual labour to the service of the state. Do you adhere to that advice today with regard to the above provinces?"

Answer: "Independence could be the same, as for the whole of India. I adhere to what I said in 1925, that all adults above a certain age, male or female, who will contribute some body labour to the state will be entitled to the vote. Thus, a simple labourer will be a voter, whereas a millionaire, a lawyer or a merchant and the like will find it hard if they don't do some body labour for the state."

Question: "If the contiguous provinces in India do not declare such independence, but the scattered ones do so, would not the presence of the non-federating units create difficulties for the rest in the matter of common action?"

Answer: "I see no difficulty, if the society is of my conception, that is, based on non-violence. Thus, supposing, populous Bengal with its gifted Tagores and Suhrawardys frames a constitution based on independence, and Assam with its opium habit dreams away life, Orissa with its skeletons has no wish, and Bihar is occupied in family slaughter, they will all three be affected and be covered by Bengal. Such infectiousness is inherent in my scheme of independence which is friend to all and enemy to none. It may well be that mine is a voice in the wilderness. If so, it is India's misfortune."

Question: "Do you expect the constitution of the free provinces to be made so attractive that others would be drawn into it?"

Answer: "Yes, attractiveness is inherent in everything that is inherently good."

Question: "Supposing, the whole of Group A forms a common constitution, do you think provinces which are now under Group B or C will be able to join A, if they so desire?"

Answer: "It goes without saying that if the Group A succeeds in framing a good constitution, not only will it be open to B and C to join, they will irresistibly be drawn to it."

Question: "What about the states? Who will decide whether a state should join the Union or not: the rulers or the people? If it is to be the latter, then what changes would you expect to be first made in the constitutions of the present states?"

Answer: "I am a mere humble ryot, but I belong to the many crores. The rajas are nominally 640, in reality they are probably less than 100. Whatever the number is, they are so few that in an awakened India, they can only exist as the servants of the ryots, not in name but in actual practice. I do not share the fear underlying the question that the British will be so dishonest, as to play the rajas against the ryots. That is not the note of the Cabinet Mission paper. But why should India depend upon the British Cabinet? When she is ready, neither the British nor the rajas, nor any combination of the powers could keep India from her destined goal, her birthright, as the Lokamanya would have said."

Gandhi reached Prasadpur on February 7. Here also he set himself to answering a question in the course of prayer discourse. The question was: "You have always been against charity and you have preached the doctrine that no man is free from the obligation of bread labour. What is your advice for the people who are engaged

in sedentary occupations, but lost their all in the last riots? Should they migrate and try to find out a place, where they can go back to their old habits of life, or should they try to remodel their life in conformity with your ideal of bread labour for everybody? What use shall their special talents be in that case?"

In reply, Gandhi said that it was true that for years he had been against charity as it was understood, and that he had preached the duty of bread labour. In this connection, he mentioned the visit he had received from the district magistrate and Zaman Saheb, along with a police officer. They wanted his opinion about giving doles to the refugees. They had already decided to put before them the work of the removal of the water hyacinth, the repair of the roads, village reconstruction, straightening out their own plots of land, or building on their own lands. Those who did any one of these things had a perfect right to the rations. He said that he liked the idea. But as a practical idealist, he would not take the refugees by storm. A variety of work should be put before the people and they should have one month's notice that if they made no choice of the occupations suggested, nor did they suggest some other acceptable occupation but declined to do any work, though their bodies were fit, they would not be able to give them doles after the expiry of the notice. He advised the refugees and their friends to render full co-operation to the Government in such a scheme of work. It was wrong for any citizen to expect rations, without doing some physical work.

If everybody lived by the sweat of his brow, the earth would become a paradise. The question of the use of special talents hardly needed separate consideration. If everyone laboured physically for his bread, it followed that poets, doctors, lawyers and others would consider it their duty to use those talents gratis for the service of humanity. Their output will be all the better and richer for their selfless devotion to duty.

In the "Question Box" of *Harijan*, he wrote:

"Question: Why should we insist on a Rabindranath or Raman earning his bread by manual labour? Is it not sheer wastage? Why should not the brain workers be considered on a par with manual workers, for both of them perform useful social work?"

"Anwser: Intellectual work is important and it has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist upon is the necessity of physical labour. No man, ought to be free from that obligation. It

will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times, the Brahmins worked with their body, as with their mind. But even if they did not, body labour was a proved necessity at the present time. In this connection, I would refer to the life of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of the bread labour, first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref."

On the morning of February 8, Gandhi reached Nandigram. At the prayer meeting, he answered some questions.

"Several workers are engaged in village work according to your direction. What has been the result of their work on the local Hindu or Muslim population? If you had not been here, would their influence have been equal to what it is at present? Will the present influence of your workers be of a lasting character?"

He replied that if he was pure and meant what he said, his work was bound to survive his death. He believed that there must be perfect correspondence between private and public conduct. Similarly if his associates were actuated purely by the spirit of service and were pure within and without, and were not dominated by glamour that surrounded him, they would work on with unabated zeal and that their joint work would flourish with time. He had never subscribed to the superstition that any good work died with worker's death. On the contrary, all true and solid work made the worker immortal by the survival of his work after his death.

At Vijaynagar on February 9, he replied to some questions that were sent to him during day. It being his day of silence, he wrote the answers, which were read out at the prayer meeting.

Question: "In almost all villages, there are parties and factions. When we draft local help, whether we wish it or not, we become involved in the local power politics. How can we steer clear of this difficulty? Should we try to by-pass both parties and carry on work with the help of outside workers? Our experience has been that such work becomes entirely contingent upon the outside aid and crumbles down, as soon as the latter is withdrawn. What should we do then to develop local initiative and foster local co-operation?"

Answer: "Alas for India that parties and factions are to be found in the villages, as they are to be found in our cities. And when the power politics enter our villages with less thought of the welfare of the villages and more of using them for increasing the parties' own

power, this becomes a hindrance to the progress of villagers, rather than any help. I would say that whatever be the consequences, we must make use, as much as possible, of the local help and if we are free from the taint of power politics, we are not likely to go wrong. Let us remember that the English-educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected the villages of India, which are, in fact, the backbone of the country. The process of remembering our neglect will induce patience. I have never gone to a single village which is devoid of an honest worker. We fail to find him, when we are not humble enough to recognize any merit in our villages. Of course, we are to steer clear of local politics, and this we shall learn to do, when we accept help from all parties and no parties, wherever it is really good. I would regard it as fatal for success to by-pass villagers. As I knew this very difficulty, I have tried rigidly to observe the rule of 'one village, one worker', except that where he or she does not know the Bengali language, an interpreter's help has been given. I can only say that this system has so far answered the purpose. I must, therefore, discount your experience. And I would further suggest that we have got into the vicious habit of coming to hasty conclusions. Before pronouncing such a sweeping condemnation, as is implied in the sentence that 'the work becomes entirely contingent upon the outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn', I would go so far as to say that even a few years' experience of residence in one village, trying to work through the local workers, should not be regarded as the conclusive proof that work could not be done through and by the local workers. The contrary is obviously true. It now becomes unnecessary for me here to examine the last sentence in detail. I can categorically say to the principal worker: 'If you have any outside help, get rid of it, and work singly, courageously, intelligently with all the local help you can get and, if you do not succeed, blame only yourself and no one else and nothing else.' "

Gandhi stayed at Vijaynagar for two days. In his second prayer speech, he referred to the fact that he was to go to Gopinathpur and was assured that it was no more than one and half miles. He began his trek but Gopinathpur seemed to be receding from view. When he had walked for forty-five minutes, he said that he should go no further, if he was not to collapse. He, therefore, had to retrace his steps. It took full one hour and twenty minutes, which was too

much for him. In future, those who invited him to walk to a place should measure the time taken by a leisurely walk. He tendered his apology to the Hindus and the Muslims of Gopinathpur, and the organizers owed an apology to Noakhali for not having been accurate and precise in their speech.

He had many questions addressed to him by the Muslims, who had seen him the previous day. He promised to answer them.

Question: "You have said, you will stay here, as long as perfect peace and amity between the two communities was not established, and you will die here, if necessary. Do you not think that such a long stay here will unnecessarily focus Indian and world attention on Noakhali, leading people to think that excesses still continued to be committed here, whereas on the contrary no unseemly acts have been committed by Muslims for sometime now?"

Gandhi replied that no impartial observer could draw the mischievous inference from his presence. He was there as a friend and servant. His presence had surely advertised Noakhali as a beautiful place, which would be a paradise on earth, if the Hindus and the Muslims lived in hearty friendship. It may be that, at the end of the chapter, he might be noted down as a failure, who knew very little about ahimsa. Moreover, it was impossible for him to stay in Noakhali, if the Hindus and the Muslims satisfied him that they had established hearty friendship between them. He was sorry to tell them that he had enough evidence to show that things were not quite as they should be.

After visiting Hamchadi on February 11th and Kafilatali on the following day, he arrived in East Keroa on the 13th. He dealt here with two questions which had been put to him during the day.

Question: "We agree that intrinsically a movement for reducing the share of the owner from half to a third of the crop is justified. But could not the present *Tebhaga* movement in Bengal be postponed until such time as when the affected persons can smoothly be absorbed in other occupations, according to some long-term plan sponsored by the state?

"We know that you have said that the only way to effect such a radical transformation in society is through non-violence. But the interested parties will sleep over that portion of your advice and parade your moral support to their demand and carry on the movement in their own violent way. And hence, is it not wrong for you

to lend support to the movement under the present circumstances, when there is every chance of the entire middle class of Bengal being completely ruined as a result? The common villager will suffer no less, because he will also be deprived of the services now being rendered to the village economy by them."

In reply, he gave the warning that he only dealt with principles as he knew them. He had not studied the local question. Therefore, the questioner ran the risk of his ignorance causing injustice.

Gandhi felt that the question betrayed exaggeration on the part of the questioner. There was no ruin impending for the landlord. His land was not being confiscated; and his portion, which he could take even if he was in Timbuctoo, was merely to be reduced from 50 per cent to 33 per cent. He could see no ruin in the proposal. He was afraid that they were too much obsessed by the communal question. They should rise above it, and examine every problem strictly on merits. Then, they would not go wrong. Therefore, they should accept the moral principle underlying the demand for reduction of owner's share and work for solid amendments in which they were likely to succeed. Let them not face confiscation, rather than moderate reduction. Let them remember that for years past India had lived through confiscation. Industry after industry had been ruined and both the artisans, as well as the farmers of India, had been progressively reduced to poverty.

If the desired change were brought about through the non-violent means, the world would not be deprived of the talents of the classes but then the latter would not exercise them at the expense of the labourers. In the non-violent order of the future, the land would belong to the state, for had it not been said '*sabhi bhumi Gopalki*'? Under such dispensation, there would be no waste of talents and of labour. This would be impossible through the violent means. It was, therefore, a truism to say that the utter ruin of the landowners brought about through violence would also involve the ruin of the labourers in the end if the landowners, therefore, acted wisely, no party would lose.

Question: "Some women workers who earn part of their living by weaving mats were advised by you to work on the co-operative principles. Bengal's agriculture has been reduced to uneconomic proposition through extreme fragmentation of holdings. Would you advise farmers also to adopt co-operative methods?"

He said that he had no doubt that the system of co-operation was far more necessary for the agriculturists than for the mat weavers. The land, he firmly maintained, belonged to the state. Therefore, it yielded the largest return, when it was worked co-operatively. Let it be remembered that co-operation should be based on strict non-violence. There was no such thing as success of violent co-operation. Hitler was a forcible example of the latter. He also talked vainly of co-operation which was forced upon the people and everyone knew where Germany had been led as a result.

In conclusion, he said that it would be a sad thing if India also tried to build up the new society based on co-operation by means of violence. Good brought about through force destroyed individuality. Only when the change was effected through the persuasive power of non-violent non-co-operation—love—could the foundation of individuality be preserved, and real, abiding progress be assured for the world.

Speaking at Keroa the following day, Gandhi read two passages from Abdullah Suhrawardy's collections of the Prophet's sayings. Three local Muslim friends had come to him and asked him to pray that God might make both live in peace and friendship. When these friends came, he was reading the sayings which he proposed to read to them: "Be in the world like a traveller, or like a passer on, and reckon yourself as of the dead."

He considered it as a gem of gems. They knew that death might overtake them any moment. What a fine preparation for the event, if all became as deads. The next question was who was the best man and who was the worst. The Prophet considered him to be the best who lived long and performed good acts, and him the worst who did bad acts. It was a very striking saying that man was to be judged by what he did, and not by what he said.

These sayings were for all men and women, and not merely for those who called themselves Musalmans. Was the Hindu part of the audience doing good acts? Was untouchability a good act? He had shouted from the house-top, that this was a blot on Hinduism. So long as that blot remained, there was no peace and no freedom for India. The British would go, but their freedom would not come without the complete removal of untouchability.

At Raipur on February 15, he dealt with the question: "All over Noakhali, there is talk that the Muslim population should boycott

the Hindus in every way. Some Muslims who have worked for the Hindus recently or helped them during the riots report that they are under threat of boycott. They ask, 'what should be the duty of those Muslims who genuinely desire peace in this connection.' "

Gandhi replied that he had heard of the boycott before. But he entertained the hope that such was not the case on any extensive scale. He had one case brought to his notice three or four days ago by a Muslim traveller from Gujarat who had come to see him. He was rebuked for daring to want to meet him. The traveller stood his ground and came out of the ordeal safely. Another poor Muslim who had come was threatened with dire penalty, if he dared to go to him. He did not know what truth there was in the description. He then instanced printed leaflets that were pasted on the walls in the name of the Muslim Pituni Party. These instances gave colour to the question. He would say to the Muslim friends and the others that these things should not frighten or disturb them. They should ignore these things, if they were isolated instances. If they were on an extensive scale, probably Government would deal with the situation. If unfortunately boycott became the policy of the Government, it would be a serious matter. He could only think non-violently. If the Government offered proper compensation, he would probably advise acceptance. He could not think out there and then the pros and cons. If, on the other hand, they resorted to confiscation, he would advise the people to stand their ground and refuse to leave their homesteads, even on pain of death. And this he would say of all provinces, whether Muslim majority or Hindu majority. He, however, hoped that no government would be mad enough to subscribe to the boycott policy whether with or without compensation. Those who belonged to land for ages could not be removed from their homesteads for the simple reason that they found themselves in a minority. That was no religion. Hindu, Muslim, Christian or any other. It was intolerance.

He had a busy Sunday at Raipur. There was a meal provided by the Hindu merchants for nearly 2,000 visitors, without distinction of caste or creed. It was meant principally to signify the abolition of caste distinctions among the Hindus. He was assured that the Muslim or Christian friends were equally welcome at the dinner. He was desirous of visiting the Jumma mosques of which there were two in Raipur. The priest in charge at one showed eagerness to have him

at his mosque. Maulvi Baharuddin Saheb, his friend, took him and his company round and he showed everything including the underground cellar, where Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani had stayed when he was in Raipur. To the other mosque, he could not go, because the maulvi in charge had not the time to see the trustees and obtain permission.

In his speech at Raipur on February 16, Gandhi referred briefly to the speech reported to have been made by Fazlul Huq. He was said to have told that, as a non-Muslim, Gandhi should not preach the teachings of Islam. For, instead of Hindu-Muslim unity, he was creating bitterness between these two communities. Had Gandhi been to Barisal, he would have driven him into the canal. He wondered how the Muslims of Noakhali and of Tipperah could tolerate his presence so long.

Gandhi said that he had grave doubts about the accuracy of the report. If it was the correct summary of the speech, he would consider it to be most unfortunate as coming from a man holding the responsible position that Mr. Fazlul Huq held, and aspiring to be President of the Muslim League. He was not aware of having done anything to create bitterness between the two communities. He had never claimed to preach Islam. What he had done was to interpret the teachings of the Prophet and refer to them in his speeches. His interpretation was submitted for acceptance or rejection.

In the same speech, Fazlul Huq had said that when Gandhi returned from South Africa, he (Mr. Huq) had asked him to embrace Islam, whereupon he said that he was a Muslim in the true sense of the term. Mr. Huq requested him to proclaim it publicly, but he refused to do so. He said that he had no recollection whatsoever of the conversation and he was never in the habit of suppressing from the public what he had uttered privately. The audience, however, knew that he had stated in various speeches in the district that he considered himself as good a Muslim as he was a Hindu, and, for that matter, he regarded himself an equally good Christian or Parsi. That such a claim would be rejected and, on some occasions, was rejected, he knew. That, however, did not affect his fundamental position, and if he had said what was attributed to him by Mr. Fazlul Huq, he would gladly declare his repentance if he would believe what was represented to him. Indeed, he had put forth the claim in South Africa to be a good Muslim simultaneously with being a

good member of the other religions of the world. He would repeat for the sake of the Ex-Premier of Bengal that he was misreported and he would welcome the correct version from him.

Speaking at Debipur on February 17, he drew their attention to a letter he had received from a responsible person saying that a Hindu lad was molested by some Muslims and that they had threatened the Hindus that they were to expect more drastic measures than the last October's after he had left Noakhali or, which was the same thing as, after his death. He would like to think that this statement was untrue. But he feared it was not. He did hope that the poison was restricted to few ill-mannered persons. Whether, however, it was restricted to a few, or whether it was a widespread trait, he ventured to think it was wholly against Islam. This, he said, with apologies to Mr. Fazlul Huq, but no less firmly on that account. It would be an evil day for Islam, or any religion, when it was impatient of outside criticism. He did not believe himself to be an outsider. He respected Islam, as he respected every other religion as his own and, therefore, he claimed to be a sympathetic, friendly critic. It was up to every good Muslim to take up a firm and an unequivocal stand against what he believed to be vicious propaganda.

On February 18, Gandhi left the Noakhali district and crossed into the contiguous district of Tipperah. Speaking in Alunia, the first village halt in Tipperah district, he dealt with some questions that lay before him.

Question: "Do you support evacuation of the Hindus from the affected areas, if the Muslim League Government or the majority community agrees to give us due compensation?"

Gandhi replied that he had supported the proposition from the non-violent standpoint. It was applicable to all provinces, whether the majority was Hindu or Muslim. What could the Government do if the majority community had become so hostile that they would not tolerate the presence of minority community? In his opinion, it would be improper for the Government to force the majority into submission, nor could they undertake to protect the minority at the point of the bayonet. Suppose, for instance, that the majority would not tolerate Ramdhun or the clapping of hand, or would not listen to the fact that Rama was not a person but the name was synonymous with God and that the Hindus believed in clapping, suppose further, that the Muslims would not tolerate that, he had then no

hesitation in saying that the minority should evacuate if adequate compensation was paid.

During the course of his address to the prayer gathering at Char Dukhia on February 19, a poser was put to him: "You have advised evacuation if the majority become irrevocably hostile. But you have also maintained that a truly non-violent man should never give up hope of converting his opponent by love. Under the circumstances, how can a non-violent man accept defeat and evacuate?"

Gandhi said that it was perfectly correct that a non-violent man would not move out of his place. For such a one, there would be no question of compensation. He would simply die at his post, and prove that his presence was not a danger to the state or the community. He knew that the Hindus of Noakhali made no such pretention. They were simple folk who loved the world, and wanted to live in the world in peace and safety. Such persons would consult their honour, if the Government honourably offered them compensation, in order to see the majority living in peace. But if the mere presence of Hindus irritated the Muslims, who were the majority, he would then consider it to be the duty of the Government to offer compensation, as it would be of the Government in a Hindu-majority province to offer compensation to the Muslims, if their presence irritated the majority community.

Whilst he examined and admitted the possibility of evacuation, his experience of all India told him that the Hindus and the Muslims knew how to live together at peace. He declined to believe that the people had said goodbye to their senses, so as to make it impossible to live at peace with each other, as they had done for generations.

For, he believed with Iqbal that the Hindus and the Muslims who had lived together long under the shadow of the mighty Himalayas and who had drunk the waters of the Ganges and the Jamuna had a unique message for the world.

The next day, Gandhi dealt with another questions at his prayer meeting in Char Larua.

Question: "If you think that the Government may boycott, that is, remove the minority community, if they give adequate compensation, may not people take time by the forelock and go?"

Gandhi rejoined that those who felt that they would take time by the forelock and if a Hindu corporation was formed to take away the Hindus, he had nothing in common with them. He could not be

a party to any such scheme. The burden then lay on the majority community and the Government. He merely meant that when they declared bankruptcy of wisdom, the minority should go, if they were adequately compensated. The other way was the way of violence, civil war, not of non-violence.

On February 21, there was a very large number of visitors from the villages near Chandpur, it being the nearest to Kamalapur. He replied here to the two questions before him.

Question: "You advocate inter-caste marriages. Do you favour the marriages between Indians professing different religions? Should they declare themselves as belonging to no denomination or can they continue their old religious practices and yet intermarry?"

Though Gandhi admitted that he had not always held the view, he had come to the conclusion long ago that an inter-religious marriage was a welcome event, whenever it took place. His stipulation was that such connection was not a product of lust. In his opinion, a product of lust was no marriage. It was illicit intercourse. Marriage in his estimation was a sacred institution. And hence, there must be mutual friendship, either party having equal respect for the religion of the other. There was no question in this of conversion. Hence, the marriage ceremony would be performed by the priests belonging to either faith. This happy event could take place, when communities shed mutual enmity and had regard for the religions of the world.

Question: "Should religious instruction form a part of school curriculum as approved by the state? Do you favour separate schools for children belonging to different denominations for the facility of religious instruction? Or should religious instruction be left in the hands of private bodies? If so, do you think is it right for the state to subsidize such bodies?"

He said that he did not believe in state religion, even though the whole community had one religion. The state interference probably would always be unwelcome. Religion was purely a personal matter. There were in reality as many religions as minds. Each mind had a different conception of God from that of the other.

He was opposed to state aid, partly or wholly, to religious bodies. For, he knew that an institution or group, which did not manage to finance its own religious teaching, was a stranger to true religion. This did not mean that the state schools would not give any ethical teaching. The fundamental ethics were common to all religions.

With regard to education, he held definite views and his mind was agitated over Maulana Azad's interview recently given as an Education Minister. In a letter to Mr. Aryanayakam of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Gandhi expressed his views definitely on all the three important questions that were exercising the public mind during the period of transition.

"You have given me a cutting from *Hindustan Standard* purporting to report the views of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on education. Assuming the correctness of the report, I say categorically that it is inconsistent with the line followed by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. It is in the villages of India where India lives, not in the few westernized cities, which are the citadels of a foreign power.

"I do not believe that the state can concern itself, or cope with religious education. I believe that religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations. Do not mix up religion and ethics. I believe that fundamental ethics is undoubtedly a function of the state. By religion I have not in mind fundamental ethics, but what goes by the name of denominationalism. We have suffered enough from state-aided religion and a state church. A society or a group, which depends partly or wholly on state aid for the existence of its religion, does not deserve or, better still, does not have any illustrations in support of this obvious truth, as it is to me.

"The second point deserving attention in the report in question is regarding the replacing of the Urdu and the Nagari scripts by the Roman script. However attractive the proposition may appear to be and whatever is true of the Indian soldiers, in my opinion, the replacing would be a fatal blunder and we would find ourselves in the fire out of the frying pan.

"The third thing that had pained me was the reference to military education. I think that we have to wait a long time before a nation-wide decision on the point is made. Otherwise, we are likely to become a curse, rather than a blessing to the world. The leaders are not made, they are born. Should the state be in a hurry over this matter, even before full independence is established? Therefore, I am surprised that the Central Advisory Board should be party to such a sweeping recommendation, as they have made."

On February 22, Gandhi reached Char Krishnapur, the fifth village in Tipperah district. Addressing the prayer gathering he said that he had received from a Muslim friend in Baluchistan a printed

sheet containing what he thought were the sayings of the Prophet and the teachers. The whole of the selection was good, but he was attracted by the following from Prophet Mahomed's sayings:

"When God made the earth it shook to and fro, till He put mountains on it to keep it firm. Then the Angels asked, O God, is there anything in Thy creation stronger than these mountains? And God replied, iron is stronger than these mountains, for it breaks them.

"And is there anything in Thy creation stronger than iron?

"Yes, fire is stronger than iron, for it melts it.

"Is there anything stronger than fire?

"Yes, water, for it quenches fire.

"Is there anything stronger than water?

"Yes, wind, for it puts water in motion.

"O our Sustainer, is there anything stronger than wind?

"Yes, a good man giving alms. If he gives it with his right hand and conceals it from his left, he overcomes all things. Every good act is charity. Your smiling in your brother's face, your putting a wanderer in the right road, and your giving water to the thirsty is charity. A man's true wealth hereafter is the good he has done to his fellow men. When he dies people will ask, what property he had left behind him? But the Angels will ask, what good deeds has he sent before him?"

Gandhi then dealt with the following questions.

Question: "Why should there be an insistence on temple entry? Of course, we understand that in case of objection, there is a scope in it for satyagraha. The no-caste dinners have a limited value; for those who join do not shed untouchability in their homes or during social ceremonies. They look upon these dinners, organized by the Congressmen or the other progressives, as special occasions, when the caste rules are held in suspense; something comparable to what one does, when one goes to Jagannathpuri and partakes of the cooked rice offered to Jagannath without any reference to one's caste. Anti-untouchability has not yet gone deep enough to affect the normal social life of individuals. What can be done to break down the barriers in private homes?"

Gandhi replied that it was an apt question in this part of Bengal where there were the largest number of the Namashudras. And he welcomed the question doubly, because he had occupied the lowest rung of the Hindu ladder and because he did not believe in the

ladder of the castes. He invited all to occupy that lowest rung. Then there would be no occasions for such questions, as were addressed to him. Meanwhile, he was bound to deal with them. He entirely endorsed the proposition that untouchability would be doomed and totally abolished, when there was no prohibition applied against anyone by reason of his caste. The only universal prohibition would be against insanitation, degradation, etc. But he clung to the belief that temple entry took the first place in the programme of removal of untouchability and he made bold to say that social public dinners would precede, as they were preceding the final conquest over the demon of untouchability. He prophesied that Hinduism would be destroyed, if untouchability was not destroyed, even as the British race would lose its name, if its British rule was not destroyed *in toto* as it was certainly being dissolved before their very eyes.

On February 23, at Char Soladi, he had the following question addressed to him:

"You say that you are in favour of the inter-religious marriages, but at the same time, you say that each party should retain his or her own religion and, therefore, you said, you tolerated even civil marriages. Are there any instances of parties belonging to different religions keeping up their own religions to the end of their lives, is not the institution of civil marriage a negation of religion, and does it not tend towards laxity of religion?"

Gandhi rejoined that the question was appropriate. He had no instances in mind, where the parties had clung to their respective faiths upto death, because these friends whom he knew had not yet died. He had, however, under his observation men and women professing different religions and each clinging to his or her own faith without abatement. But he would go so far as to say that they need not wait for the discovery of past instances. They should create new ones, so that timid ones may shed their timidity.

As to civil marriages, Gandhi did not believe in them, but he welcomed the institution of civil marriage as a much needed reform for the sake of reform.

On February 24, Gandhi reached Haimchar. In his prayer discourse he referred to communications, telegraphic and otherwise, he had received for his opinion on Mr. Attlee's statement. He said that there were the Congress and the League, not to mention other associations, which would express their authoritative opinions. He

would, however, permit himself to say that the statement had put the burden on the various parties of doing what they thought best. It had declared that the British rule would end before or during the month of June 1948. It was up to the parties to make or mar the situation. Nothing on earth could overturn their united wish. And so far as he was concerned, he was emphatically of the opinion that if the Hindus and the Muslims closed their ranks and came together without any external pressure, then they would not only better their political condition, but they would affect the whole of India and probably the world.

It was an easy descent to what was uppermost in the mind of his audience composed mostly of the Namashudras. He warned them against considering themselves as fallen or untouchables. Those so-called higher castes were the guilty ones and they were responsible for what they had become. If the Namashudras realized this fact, they would never make the mistake of imitating the evil customs and habits of the higher classes.

He was sorry to hear that there were child marriages amongst the Namashudras and that the child widows were compelled in imitation of the higher castes to abstain from re-marrying. The result, he had learned, was that diseases, which resulted from promiscuity, were prevalent among them. Their betterment would not come from the legislatures, or from any other outside agency. It depended on their own efforts. They should remember what Malaviyaji used to say that children of God should confine themselves to earning an honest cowrie and eat what it could procure. Then there would be happiness for them and untouchability would be a thing of the past. The higher castes, so called, would be ashamed of their sin against them.

Thakkar Bapa had pointed out the destruction that was wrought. He was sorry for it, but he would not shed a tear for it, nor harbour ill will against the destroyers. Let them not bewail their lot. They were used to hard labour, or should be. They might plead with the Government to do justice and that too in time. But they would not give in, if that assistance did not come. They must trust their hands and feet to set them up again in life. God always helped those who helped themselves. Their reliance must be on the living God and on the toiling masses.

On February 25, Gandhi drew the attention of the audience to the meeting he was invited to attend by the Relief Commissioner,

Mr. Nurannabi Choudhury. He asked them to follow the advice he had given without waiting for knowing what the others would do. He said that he wanted the Kingdom of God on earth. Surely, they did not want to wait for any one else to do so.

The following day, he dealt with some questions.

Question: "When things are all going wrong at the Centre, what can common people do to restore unity?"

Answer: There was a law of science, which enunciated that two forces were simultaneously at work: the centripetal and the centrifugal. He wanted to apply the law to life also. The centre, therefore, of the Government attracted us all to it and in good government we would respond to that centripetal force. Similar was the centrifugal force in obedience to which we, the villagers of Haimchar, attracted the centre. And thus, where these two forces worked well, there would be an ordered and orderly government at the centre and at the circumference. When, however, the centre was all going wrong, it should be pointless to dominate the seven hundred thousand villages. On the other hand, the villagers would live in perfect amity, if they were wise in leaving alone the centre to look after its so-called high politics.

Question: "A man who sacrifices self-interest for the sake of his community is at least unselfish to that extent. How can the heart of such a man be affected, so that he will sacrifice communal interests for the interest of the nation?"

He said that a man whose spirit of sacrifice did not go beyond his own community became selfish himself and also made his community selfish. In his opinion, the logical conclusion of self-sacrifice was that the individual sacrificed himself for the community, the community sacrificed itself for the district, the district for the province, the province for the nation, and the nation for the world. A drop torn from the ocean perished without doing any good. But if it remained a part of the vast ocean, it shared the glory of carrying on its bosom a fleet of mighty ships.

The opposition to Gandhi's stay in Noakhali had begun to take an ugly turn towards the end of February. The roads over which he walked were deliberately dirtied, and Muslims began to boycott his meetings more persistently. He bore it with calmness and patience. For, he held stubbornly to the view that it would never be right for him to surrender his own love for humanity, even if they were

erring. The anxiety and anger which occasionally assailed him in the earlier days of Noakhali were replaced by an active and deeper concern for the Muslim community, wherever it was subjected to suffering. While Gandhi was thinking over this, one day a messenger arrived with a letter from Dr. Syed Mahmud, Congress Minister of Bihar, who thought that Gandhi's presence in that province would do good to the suffering Muslim minority there. This confirmed an earlier message from Sardar Niranjan Singh Gill, who had written to say that the progress of rehabilitation in Bihar was unsatisfactory. Immediately, he made up his mind to interrupt the tour of Noakhali for the sake of Bihar.

On February 28, he referred to the prospect of his having to go to Bihar and about the atrocities that had been committed by the Hindus there, before which the happenings in Noakhali or Tipperah paled into insignificance. He had enough pressure put upon him by the Muslims in Bengal to go to Bihar. He had refused to listen to the advice, because he had the hope that he could work with equal effect among the Bihar Hindus without having to go to Bihar. But he had a visit from the secretary of Dr. Syed Mahmud. He had brought a long letter from Dr. Mahmud. They should know that Dr. Mahmud was a valued friend of his. He was himself Development Member of the Bihar ministry. In answer to his question, Dr. Mahmud had written to him asking him to visit Bihar, as soon as he could. He had said that all was not as rosy, as it should be, and that his presence in Bihar would ease the situation and reassure the Muslims that he was equally concerned about the welfare of the Muslims, as that of the Hindus. He could not resist Dr. Mahmud's letter. He had, therefore, sent an urgent telegram to Bihar and it was highly likely that he might have to hurry to Bihar. In that case, he would have to interrupt the tour in Noakhali and Tipperah. But the message he would leave for the Hindus and the Muslims here, during the short stay he expected to be absent, was that they should live with one another as brothers. This they could only do, if each shed internal weaknesses and were prepared to lay down their lives without retaliation for the defence of what they considered sacred.

He then passed on to a question which had been referred to him that evening. It was with regard to the partition of Bengal into two provinces, one having a Hindu and the other a Muslim majority. The Bengalis had once fought against and successfully annulled the

partition of their province. But according to some, the time had now come when such a division had become desirable in the interest of peace. He expressed the opinion that personally he had always been for anti-partition. But, it was not uncommon even for brothers to fight and separate from one another. There were many things which India had to put up with in the past under compulsion, but he himself was built in a totally different way.

In a similar manner, if the Hindus, who formed the majority in the whole of India, desired to keep everyone united by means of compulsion, he would resist it in the same manner as before. He was as much against forced partition, as against forced unity.

Gandhi then proceeded to say that whatever might have been the history of the British rule in the past, there was no shadow of doubt that the British were going to quit India in the near future. It was time, therefore, that the Hindus and Muslims should determine to live in peace and amity. The alternative was civil war which would only serve to tear the country to pieces. One did not know what the future had in store for them. If the people really and sincerely, and with a pure heart, wished unitedly for a particular thing, speaking in human language, it could be said that God, being the servant of His servants, would Himself carry out that will.

Gandhi arrived at Chandpur by a jeep to leave for Bihar. During the seven week's "pilgrimage", he walked barefoot about 116 miles and visited 47 villages. Perhaps, for the first time, he made no collection for the Harijan Fund. The reason was that he was among an afflicted people, and that, he was moving among a population, the majority of whom was hostile.

The epic of Noakhali closed, when Gandhi boarded a steamer at Chandpur on March 2.

## *In Bihar*

1947

ON THE way to Patna, Gandhi spent a day at Sodepur on March 4. In his discourse at the prayer meeting, he revealed that he had an urgent wire from President Kripalani saying that he should attend the Congress Working Committee meeting at Delhi on March 6. Gandhi said he was obliged not to comply with the wish, because that was not within his present beat.

He said that he had not expected to be in Calcutta so soon. His work in Noakhali was by no means finished. But there was a call from Bihar, which he dared not resist without abandoning his aim of life. For him, there was no distinction between the Hindus and Muslims. When, therefore, he heard that all was not as it should be, he decided at once to lose no time in going to Bihar.

Gandhi arrived at Patna in the morning of March 5, 1947. As it was his first visit to Bihar after an interval of seven years, there was a very large gathering to greet him at the evening prayer. The Bihar ministry had made special arrangements for the distribution of the printed copies of Gandhi's prayer speeches in the country-side, by means of an aeroplane.

He referred to the mission which had brought him to Bihar, the occasion being Dr. Syed Mahmud's letter sent through his private secretary. He had flattered himself with the belief that it would be unnecessary for him to visit what he had affectionately described as "my Bihar" by right of service. But Dr. Mahmud's letter led him to think that all was not as well, as it should be. He knew that what the Hindus of Bihar had done towards their brethren, the Muslims, was infinitely worse than what Noakhali had done. He had hoped that they had done or were doing all reparations that were possible and that was in magnitude as great as the crime. That meant that if there was real repentance, they should prove the truth of the great saying: "The greater the sinner, the greater the sin."

Gandhi hoped that the Bihar Hindus would not be guilty of self-righteousness by simply saying that the Biharis, who had forgotten in a fit of insanity that they were human beings, were drawn from the goonda elements for whom the Congressmen of Bihar could not be held responsible. If the Congressmen adopted the attitude of self-righteousness, then they would reduce the Congress to a miserable party, whereas the Congress claimed and he had repeated the claim in London at the Round Table Conference that he had attended, that of all the organizations in India the Congress was the only one organization which rightfully claimed to represent the whole of India, whether it was called the French India or the Portuguese India or the India of the states, because the Congress claimed by its right of service to represent not only the nominal Congressmen, or its sympathizers, but also its enemies. Therefore, the Congress had to make itself responsible for the misdeeds of all communities and all classes. It should be its proud privilege to better and improve the moral, the material and the physical condition of the whole of India to entitle it to the proud claim it had made ever since its existence. As a matter of fact, it would be wrong even to say that there was not a single Congressman involved in the mad upheaval. That many Congressmen had staked their lives, in order to save their Muslim friends and brethren, was no answer to the charge that was justly hurled against the Bihar Hindus by indignant and injured Muslims who have not hesitated to describe the crime in Bihar as having no parallel in history. If he was so minded, he would be able to show that there were to be found in history examples of human monsters having done crimes even worse than those of the Hindus of Bihar. But he did not want to be guilty of making comparisons and weigh the greatness of crimes in golden scales. On the contrary, a truly repentant man would never want to flatter himself by even thinking that he was not as bad as his predecessors. There was a legitimate place for rivalry in doing good and in outdoing one's predecessors and one's own labours in the act of service. He was, therefore, very much grieved to find that there were thoughtless Hindus in all parts of India who falsely hugged the belief that Bihar had arrested the growth of the lawlessness that was to be witnessed in Noakhali. He wished to remind them in forcible terms that that way of thinking and doing was the way to perdition and slavery, never to freedom and bravery. It was a cowardly thing for a man to believe that the

barbarity, such as was exhibited, could ever protect a civilization or a religion, or defend freedom. He was able from the recent first-hand knowledge to declare that where there was cowardice on the one hand, there was cruelty on the other. The way, therefore, to take reprisals upon Noakhali was to learn how not to copy the barbarous deeds such as Noakhali had proved itself capable of, but to return barbarism by manliness, which consisted in daring to die without a thought of retaliation and without in any way compromising one's honour. Thus, he warned the audience and through them the whole of India that, if they really wished to see India independent in every sense of the term, they must not imitate barbarous methods. Those who resorted to such methods would find that they were retarding the day of India's deliverance.

On March 6, a note had been handed to Gandhi reminding him that the Holi festival fell on the following day. There was a time, he observed, when the Hindus and the Muslims lived side by side as peaceful neighbours. If things had today come to such a pass that they could no more look upon one another as friends, let them at least not behave as enemies. There was a fear among the Muslims that the occasion of Holi might be marked by renewed attacks upon them. It was surprising that he was hearing from them what he had heard from the Hindus in Noakhali and Tipperah and he felt ashamed to have to listen to the same tales in Patna as in Noakhali. He would, therefore, venture to say to his Muslim brothers in Bihar what he had told the Hindus in Noakhali, namely, that they should shed all fear of man and should trust God. But he knew that it was a counsel of perfection.

Cries of "Bande Mataram", "Jai Bharat", "Jai Hind" frightened the Muslims today. Were the shouts of "Bharat-ki-jai" going to mean "Musalman-ki-kshai"? It was a matter of shame that things had been brought to such a pass. He had been meeting several Muslim League friends these days, who, he felt, had opened their hearts before him and asked him if the Muslims would not really be allowed to remain any more in a province like Bihar. The Muslim friends who were in the Congress like Dr. Syed Mahmud had also expressed their uneasiness at the present situation. This terrorization of brother by brother, if it were true, was unbearable for him. Were they really going to return one act of madness by another? In that event, India could only be drowned in a sea of blood.

Gandhi was firmly of the opinion that this could not be our fate, if we were determined to have it otherwise. He wanted everyone to celebrate the Holi in such a manner that every single Muslim felt that the Hindus had not only repented for what had been done to them, but they had also gathered love for them to an extent which outdid their previous sentiments. If the Holi was marked by this revival of the old friendly relations, then, indeed, it would be a truly religious celebration.

There was one thing more which he wanted to tell the audience in the hope that justice would be done, wherever his voice could reach. It had been conveyed to him that there were Muslim women even now kept perforce in the Hindu homes. If that were true and if, of course, such women were still living, he would expect everyone of them to be restored to their homes. The miscreants should show true repentance and every Hindu should consider it his duty to impress upon them that they should repent and face punishment courageously for their misdeeds. If that were too much for them, he would at least expect the women to be restored to him or to Babu Rajendra Prasad in perfect safety.

It was not enough that the Hindus should express lip repentance or compensate the sufferers by means of money. What was really needed was that their hearts should become pure and, in place of hatred or indifference which was sweeping over them, love should reign, so that under its glow every single Muslim man, woman and child felt perfectly secure and free to pursue his or her own religious practices, without the least let or hindrance. Let us all, he prayed, make Holi an occasion for the initiation of this relation between the two sister communities.

Gandhi began his address on March 7 by saying that just before starting for the prayer ground he had taken a brief rest. The whole of his waking hours during the day had been spent in listening to the reports and the accounts brought in by the many Muslim and Hindu friends. None of them had been able to assure him that the things had settled down to complete normality. This had fatigued him mentally, and hence he needed rest.

It was because his thoughts reached tonight only those brothers and sisters who had perhaps no direct influence upon rioters, that he had been seriously thinking if he should not march from village to village in the manner of Noakhali, so that what little power his

thoughts contained might be conveyed directly to the most distant villager who had done a wrong to his brother Muslim.

Bihar was the land of Tulsidas' Ramayana. However uneducated or poor a Bihari might be, his voice ever rang with the music of the mighty epic. They knew what was sin and what was also meant by religious merit. The misdeeds which had come out of their hands had been of terrible proportions. Should not then their atonement be of the same order? There is a saying: "The greater the sinner, the greater the sin." It was in this spirit that they should approach those who had suffered at their hands and try to do the right by them.

Gandhi said at the prayer meeting on March 8th that he hoped the audience would forgive him for speaking always and exclusively on the theme which had brought him to Bihar. It had become his duty to listen to the tale of woe that the Muslim sufferers told him from day to day. One of them had come to him and he had complained that, even so recently as two days ago, things were pilfered from Muslim houses. If such was the case, it was most unfortunate and if it was at all general, it betrayed a lack of spirit of repentance without which there was no possibility of concord between the two communities in Bihar, indeed in the whole of India.

At the prayer meeting on March 9, his speech was read out, as he had already commenced his silence:

"It is good that I have one day of silence in the week. And how beautiful it would be, if everyone could spend at least a few hours in the day in silent introspection, if it were not possible for them to spend one whole day in complete silence! If the people were accustomed to such spiritual exercise, their hands could never have been stained by the deeds which have actually taken place in Bihar. But this is not the occasion for dilating upon the benefits of the practice of silence.

"Today, it is my object to indicate in brief the duty of those who did not personally participate in the shameful killings, which took place in this province. Their first duty is to purify their thoughts. When the thoughts are not pure, one's action can never be purified. Pure action can never come from imitation. If one tries to become good by merely imitating the good conduct of the others, such conduct can never succeed in radiating any influence upon the others, because it is after all not the true stuff. But one whose heart has become also really pure along with his actions, can at once sense the

true character of the thoughts which influence the behaviour of his neighbours. When the thoughts and actions both have become pure, there can be no repetition of the deeds which have marred the fair face of Bihar. But the world never progresses in a straight line. The thoughts and the actions of men never follow a parallel and uniform course. For all men, these two can never be completely purified at any single point of time.

"Therefore, I would wish to indicate tonight only that ideal of duty which the workers should keep before themselves, if workers are available in sufficiently large numbers. It should be their first duty to explain clearly to the miscreants the full consequence of their misdeeds. It should be explained to the wrongdoers that such deeds can never be of any good to them personally, nor can they serve the cause of Hinduism or of the country. It should be explained to them that they have not been able to harm those whom they intended. They should also be induced to come forward and confess openly their misdeeds before the public. They should also restore looted property and abducted women to the proper quarters."

Addressing the prayer gathering on the following day, Gandhi reported that several correspondents had complained to him that he was utilizing his prayer meetings for the propagation of his favourite political ideas. But he never suffered from any feeling of guilt on that account. Human life being an undivided whole, no line could ever be drawn between its different compartments, nor between the ethics and the politics. A trader who earned his wealth by deception only succeeded in deceiving himself, when he thought that his sins could be washed away by spending some of his ill-gotten gains on the so-called religious purposes. One's everyday life was never capable of being separated from his spiritual being. Both acted and reacted upon one another.

He referred to a certain letter he had received from a very frank and honest friend. The letter had reminded him that the efforts for religious toleration that he had been making were all in vain, for, after all, the quarrel between the Hindus and the Muslims was not on account of their religious differences, but was essentially political in origin; religion had only been made to serve as a label for the political distinctions. The friend had expressed the opinion that it was a tussle between the united India on the one hand, and India divided on the other. He confessed that he did not yet know what

the full meaning of dividing India really was. But what he wanted to impress upon the audience was that supposing it were only a so-called political struggle, did it mean that all the rules of decency and morals should be thrown to the winds? When human conflicts were divorced from the ethical considerations, the road could only lead to the use of the atom bomb, where every trace of humanity was held completely in abeyance. If there were honest differences among the people of India, should it then mean that the forty crores should descend to the level of beasts, slaughter men, women and children, innocent and guilty alike, without the least compunction? Could they not agree to settle their differences decently and in a comradely spirit? If they failed, only slavery of an unredeemable type could await them at the end of the road.

At this stage, the audience near the dais became noisy and he had to cut short his speech. Unlike the other days, he stayed on for the collection for the Muslim sufferers. He made a fervent appeal to the audience to untie their purse strings generously and contribute all that they possibly could towards the fund.

In his address on March 11, he stated that that was perhaps his last evening prayer for the time being in the city of Patna, because his tour was going to begin on the following day. For the next few days, he would tour with the city as the centre, and would return to it at night for rest, the prayers being naturally held elsewhere. He expected, however, that the spirit in which the previous evening's contributions to the fund for the Muslim sufferers had been made would continue unabated. The collections had amounted to nearly Rs. 2,000, besides there were some ornaments which yet remained to be auctioned. He was glad that the women had given their ornaments, and he reminded them that the true ornament of a woman was a pure heart, the place of which could never be taken by any physical adornment.

On March 12, Gandhi held his prayer by the side of the Mangles Talao in the Patna city. On his way, he had visited the village of Kumrahar where a prosperous Muslim family had been ruined by wholesale plunder. All the books, furniture and other belongings had been destroyed, while a neighbouring mosque had been stripped of its wood work and then left practically in ruins.

He referred in his prayer speech to the decision of British Government to quit India. The British were a nation with a strong sense of

reality; and when they realized that it did not pay to rule, they did not hesitate to withdraw their power over a country. This had been the course of British history in the past. If the British were going, as they surely were, what should be the duty of Indians at the same time? Were we to return blow for blow among ourselves, and thus perpetuate our own slavery, only to tear up our motherland, in the end, into bits which went by the name of Hindustan and Pakistan, Brahministan and Achutistan? What greater madness could there be than what had taken place in Bengal and Bihar, or what was taking place in the Punjab or Frontier Province?

Should we forget our humanity and return a blow for a blow? If some misdirected individual took it into his head to desecrate a temple or break idols, should a Hindu in return desecrate a mosque on that account? Did it any way help to protect the temple or to save the cause of Hinduism? Personally, he was as much an idol-worshipper as an idol-breaker, and he suggested that the whole of the audience, whether they admitted it or not. He knew that mankind thirsted for symbolism. Were not the masjids or the churches in reality the same as the mandirs? God resided everywhere, no less in stock or stone than in a single hair on the body of man. But men associated sacredness with particular places and things, more than with others. Such sentiment was worthy of respect, when it did not mean restrictions on similar freedom for others. To every Hindu and Muslim, his advice was that if there was compulsion anywhere, they should gently but firmly refuse to submit to it. Personally, he himself would hug an idol and lay down his life to protect it, rather than brook any restriction upon his freedom of worship.

He said that he had come to Bihar, in order to help the people to realize the extent of the madness to which they had stooped. His object was to induce them to repent and thus undo the wrongs which had been perpetrated. Ruined houses of the Muslim family he had just visited, had almost brought tears to his eyes. But he had steeled his heart and he had come to teach the Hindu his duty towards his Muslim brother. True repentance required true courage. And Bihar, which had risen to great heights during satyagraha in Champaran and which was the land over which the Buddha had roamed and taught, was surely capable once more of rising to the heights from which it could radiate its effulgence over the rest of India. Only unadulterated non-violence could raise it to that status.

The next day, in company of Khan Ghaffar Khan, Gandhi visited ruined Muslim homes of the village of Pasa, before he reached the prayer ground at Ebbadulah Chawk. He began his prayer address by a reference to the sight which had just greeted his eyes, and he expressed surprise at the madness which had temporarily swept over the otherwise peaceful inhabitants of Bihar. To anybody who felt that Bihar was avenging Noakhali by what it did, he would firmly say that this was not the way of vengeance. The mentality which made one section of the Indians look upon another as enemies was suicidal, it could only serve to perpetuate their slavery. And in the end, such a mentality might even lead a person into the parochial feeling, when he would prize the freedom of his own village above everything else, if that were at all possible. What he really wanted every Indian to develop was the sense that an evil deed committed anywhere in India was the concern of every other Indian. Everyone should hold himself personally responsible for it and share the burden of undoing the wrong. Any other course could only lead them to happenings which the Punjab was witnessing today.

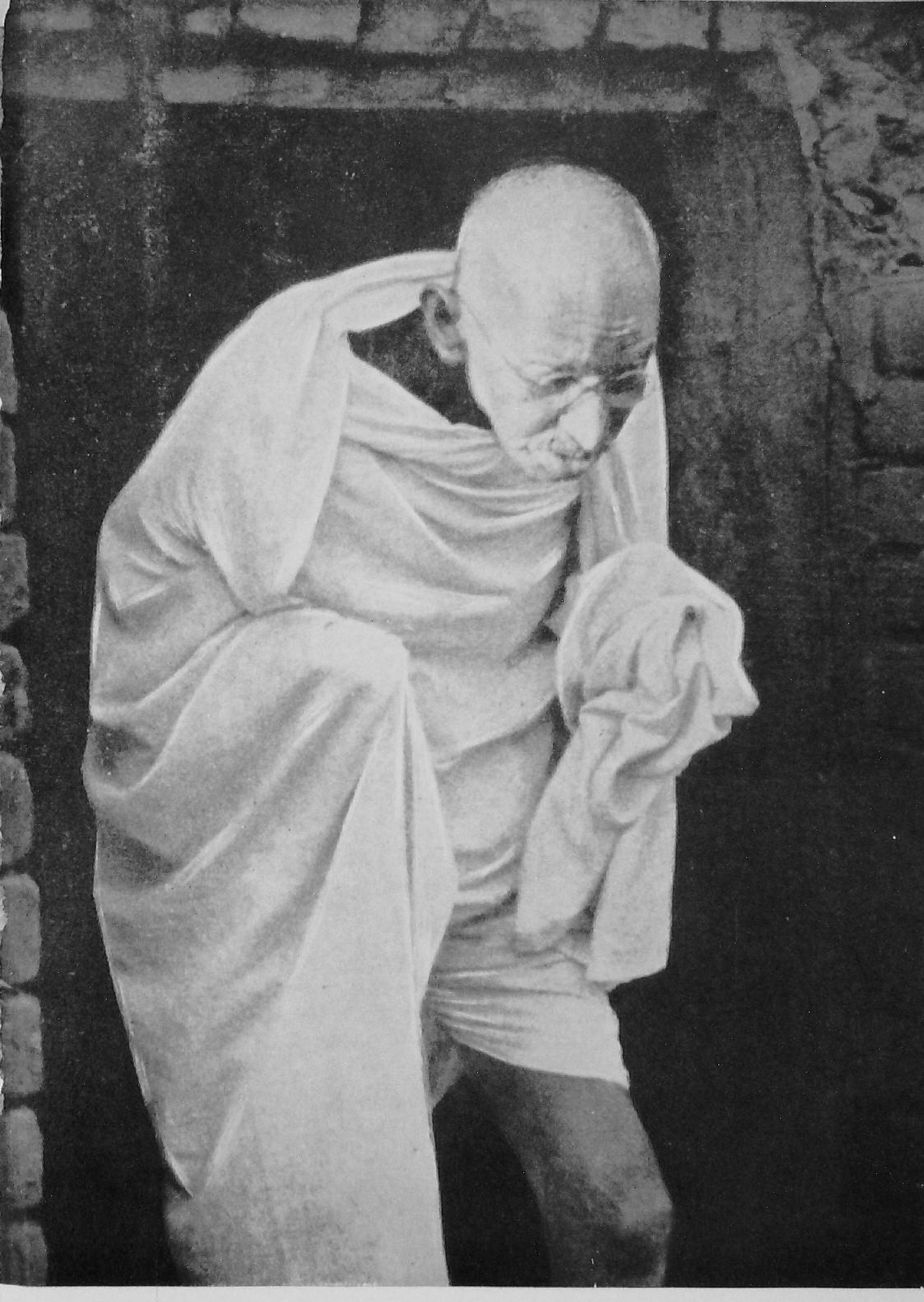
Many invitations had now come to him to leave Bihar in charge of the people's representatives and to proceed to the Punjab for the restoration of peace. But he did never consider himself so vain as to think that he could serve everywhere. He considered himself to be an humble instrument in the hands of God. His only hope was to do or die in the quest for peace and amity between the two sister communities in Bihar and Bengal. And he could only go away, when both the communities had become friendly with one another and no longer needed his services. In spite of the fact that he could not see his way of going to the Punjab, he hoped that his voice would reach the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs of that province, who should try to put an end to the senseless savagery, which had now gripped them in its hold.

Khusrupur was one of the small towns where the comparatively prosperous Muslim residents were subjected to concentrated attack. Prior to arrival at the prayer ground on March 14, Gandhi visited several such ruined homes and, when he began his discourse after the prayer, he appealed to the audience to lend him not only their ears, but their hearts as well. His aim was the restoration of the old feelings which formerly prevailed among the Bihari Hindus and Muslims. Then, it could be said of them that they did not merely

live like brothers, but they were veritably as brothers and sisters to one another. Now and then, there might have been differences and even quarrels, but it never went to the point when heart was rent from heart, as it seemed to be now. Painful things had happened which it was even difficult for him to relate; but then he wanted them to keep such happenings in the background and think of what their duty was in the present context.

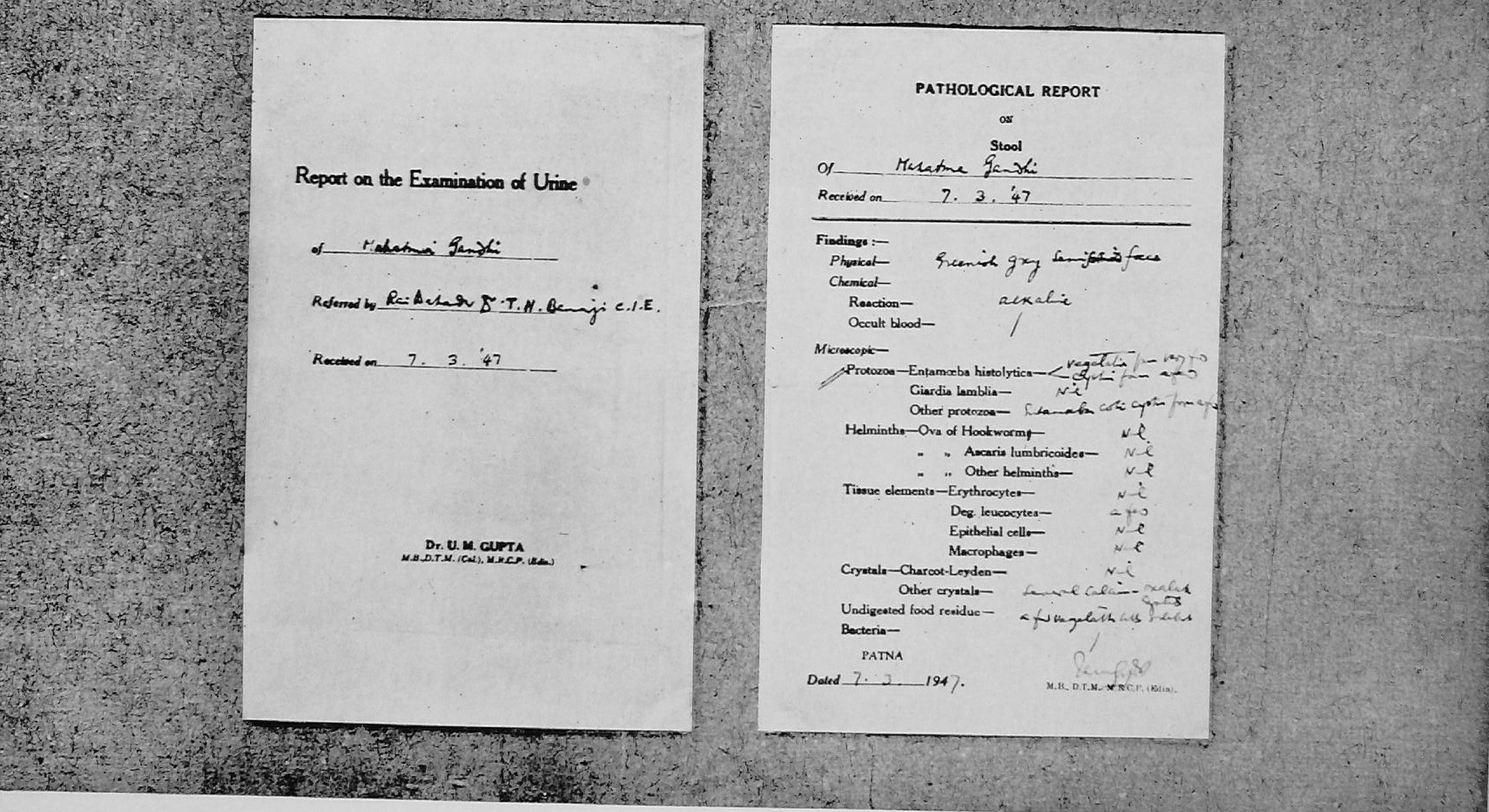
He said that there were only two ways lying before the country: the course that the Punjab seemed to have taken of returning a blow for a blow, and the other of unadulterated non-violence. Referring to the method of violence, he remarked that some sort of peace might perhaps be established in the province by means of force. He would hope, but it could not be said with confidence, that the evil would not spread throughout India, as it had happened in the case of 1857. Similar things, as we all know, had happened during the Sepoy Mutiny, when it was quelled by means of superior arms. Outwardly, things quieted down, but the hatred against an imposed rule went deep underground, with the result that we are even today reaping the harvest of what was then sown. The British Government took the place of the East India Company. They established schools and law courts and Indians took to these with enthusiasm, they even co-operated in the diffusion of western culture. But in spite of all this, the Indians could never bear the insult or the degradation, involved in political subjugation. Similarly, but in a worse manner, if the Punjab quietened down by reason of superior force used against the people of the Punjab, the seed of further quarrel and bitterness between brothers and sisters that the Hindus and the Muslims were, would go still deeper.

Gandhi proceeded to say that if the Hindus of Bihar imagined that the way of violence alone was the proper answer to the challenge of the times, then let them say so frankly and truthfully. He would not be hurt by the truth, but he would prefer not to live and see the day when the method of non-violence was thus beaten. And it did not matter where he laid down his life for bringing about his cherished aim, anywhere in India would still be India for him. But he still hugged the hope that non-violence would surely be crowned by victory in the end; for, in the example which Bihar might set in this line today, lay the future hope of peace and progress for our unhappy land.



*Photograph : B. K. Sinha*

Gandhi's visit to a place of desolation in Bihar, March 1947



Report on the Examination of Urine

of Mahatma Gandhi

Referred by Rai Bahadur Dr. T. N. Banerji C.I.E.

Received on 7. 3. '47

Dr. U. M. GUPTA
M.B.,D.T.M. (Cal.), M.R.C.P. (Edin.)

PATHOLOGICAL REPORT
ON
Stool

Of Mahatma Gandhi

Received on 7. 3. '47

Findings :—
Physical— Greenish grey [illegible] faeces
Chemical—
Reaction— alkaline
Occult blood— /

Microscopic—
Protozoa—Entamœba histolytica— vegetative [illegible] / cystic [illegible]
Giardia lamblia— Nil
Other protozoa— [illegible] coli cysts [illegible]
Helminths—Ova of Hookworm— Nil
" " Ascaris lumbricoides— Nil
" " Other helminths— Nil
Tissue elements—Erythrocytes— Nil
Deg. leucocytes— [illegible]
Epithelial cells— Nil
Macrophages— Nil
Crystals—Charcot-Leyden— Nil
Other crystals— [illegible] oxalate
Undigested food residue— [illegible] vegetable cells [illegible]
Bacteria—

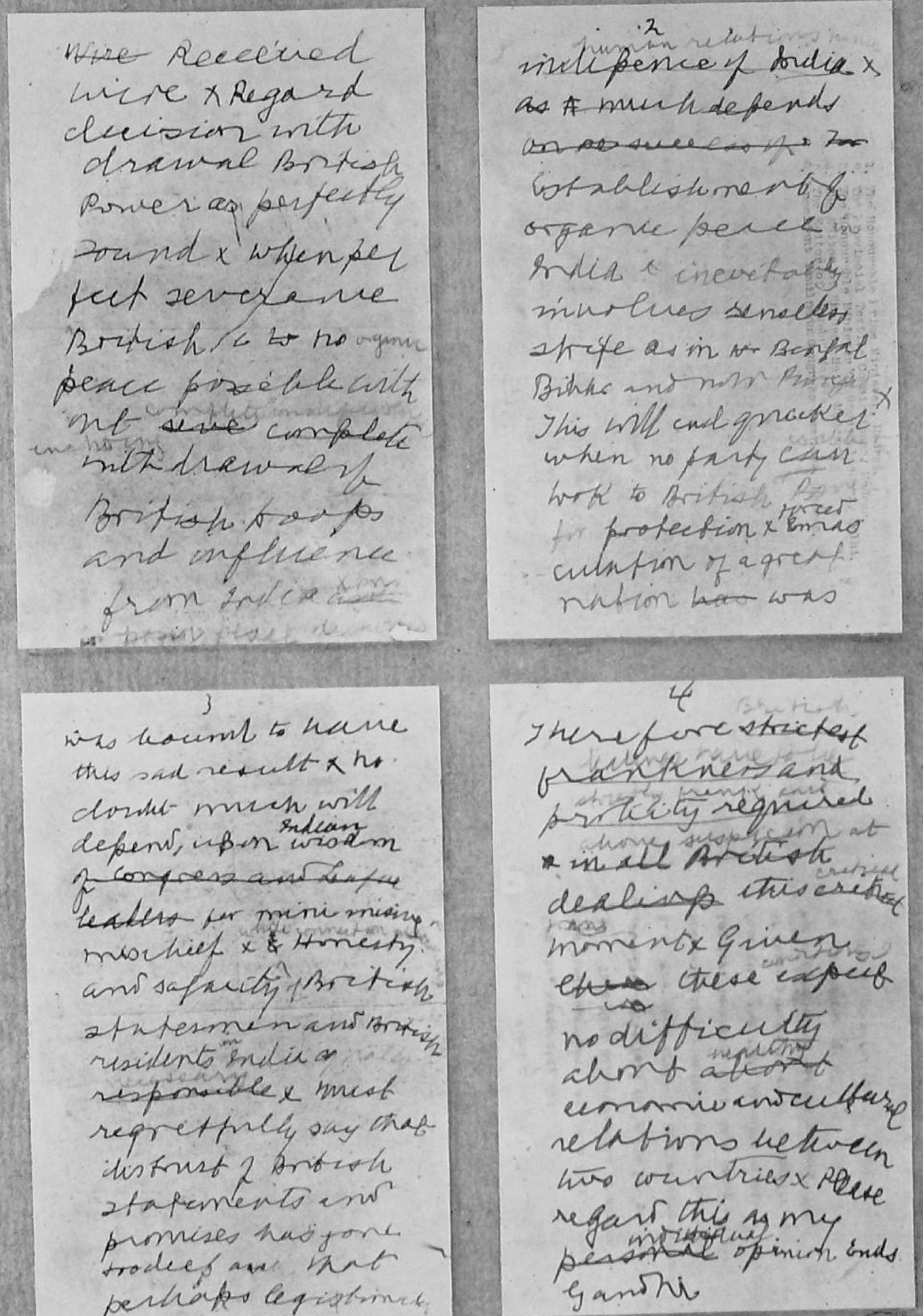
PATNA

Dated 7. 3. 1947.

[illegible signature]
M.B., D.T.M., M.R.C.P. (Edin).

Courtesy : Manubehn Gandhi

Pathological report of Gandhi's health, dated Patna, March 7, 1947



Received wire x Regard decision withdrawal British Power as perfectly sound x When I feel severance British is to no organic peace possible without complete withdrawal of British troops and influence from India

2

independence of India x as much depends establishment of organic peace India inevitably involves senseless strife as in Bengal Bihar and now Punjab x This will end quickest when no party can look to British forces for protection x Emasculation of a great nation was

3

was bound to have this sad result x no doubt much will depend upon Indian wisdom leaders for minimising mischief x & Honesty and sagacity British statesmen and British residents in India x Must regretfully say that distrust of British statements and promises has gone too deep and that perhaps legitimately

4

Therefore strictest frankness and probity required in all British dealings this critical moment x Given these expect no difficulty about economic and cultural relations between two countries x Please regard this as my individual opinion Ends

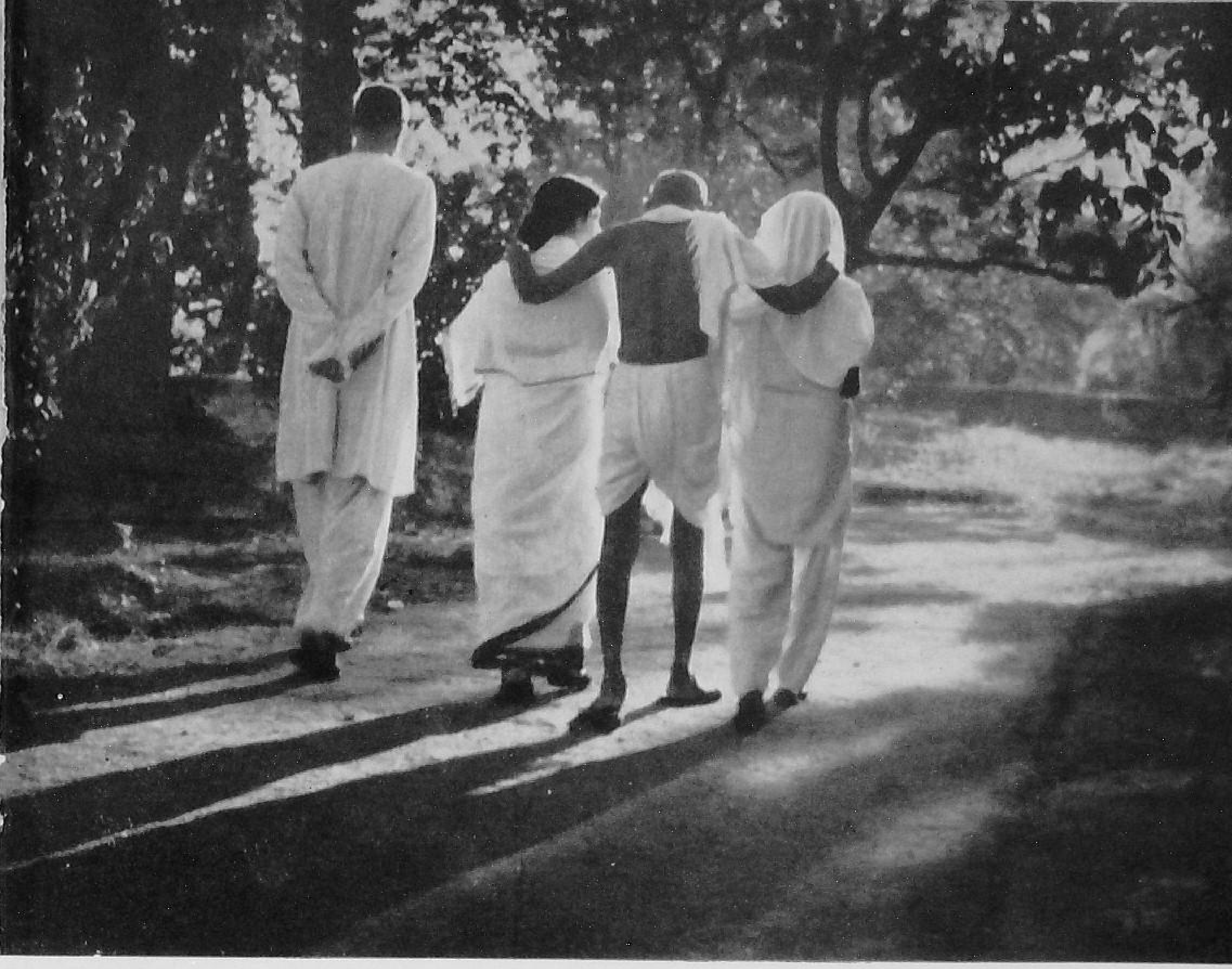
Gandhi

*Courtesy : Prof. N. K. Bose*

Gandhi's draft of a telegraphic reply to *Cavalcade,* dated March 12, 1947

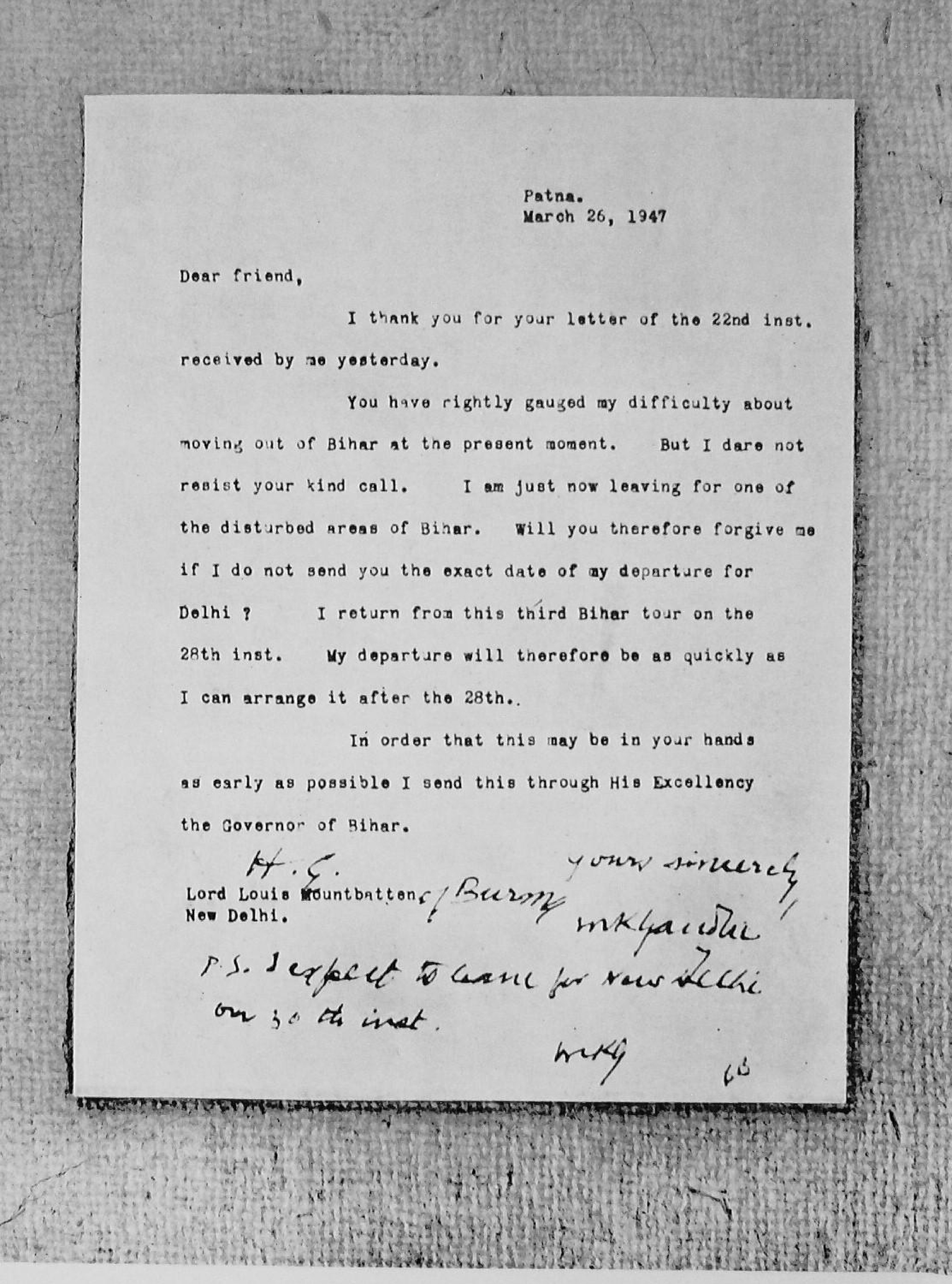
*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Visit to a riot affected area in Bihar, March 1947



*Photograph : Jagan Mehta*

On his evening walk in Patna, March 22, 1947



Patna.
March 26, 1947

Dear friend,

I thank you for your letter of the 22nd inst. received by me yesterday.

You have rightly gauged my difficulty about moving out of Bihar at the present moment. But I dare not resist your kind call. I am just now leaving for one of the disturbed areas of Bihar. Will you therefore forgive me if I do not send you the exact date of my departure for Delhi ? I return from this third Bihar tour on the 28th inst. My departure will therefore be as quickly as I can arrange it after the 28th.

In order that this may be in your hands as early as possible I send this through His Excellency the Governor of Bihar.

Yours sincerely,
M K Gandhi

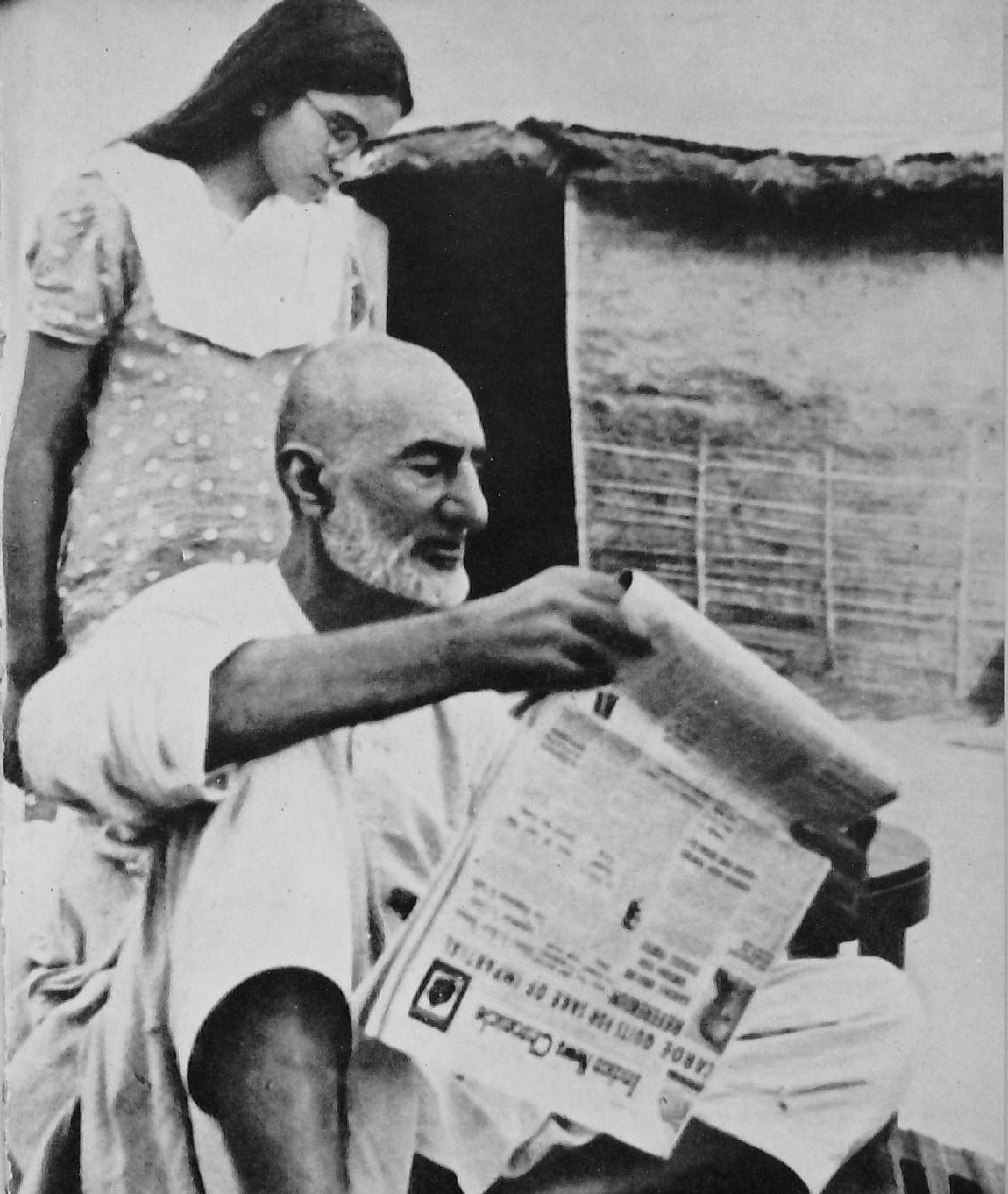
H. E.
Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma
New Delhi.

P.S. I expect to leave for New Delhi on 30th inst.

MKG

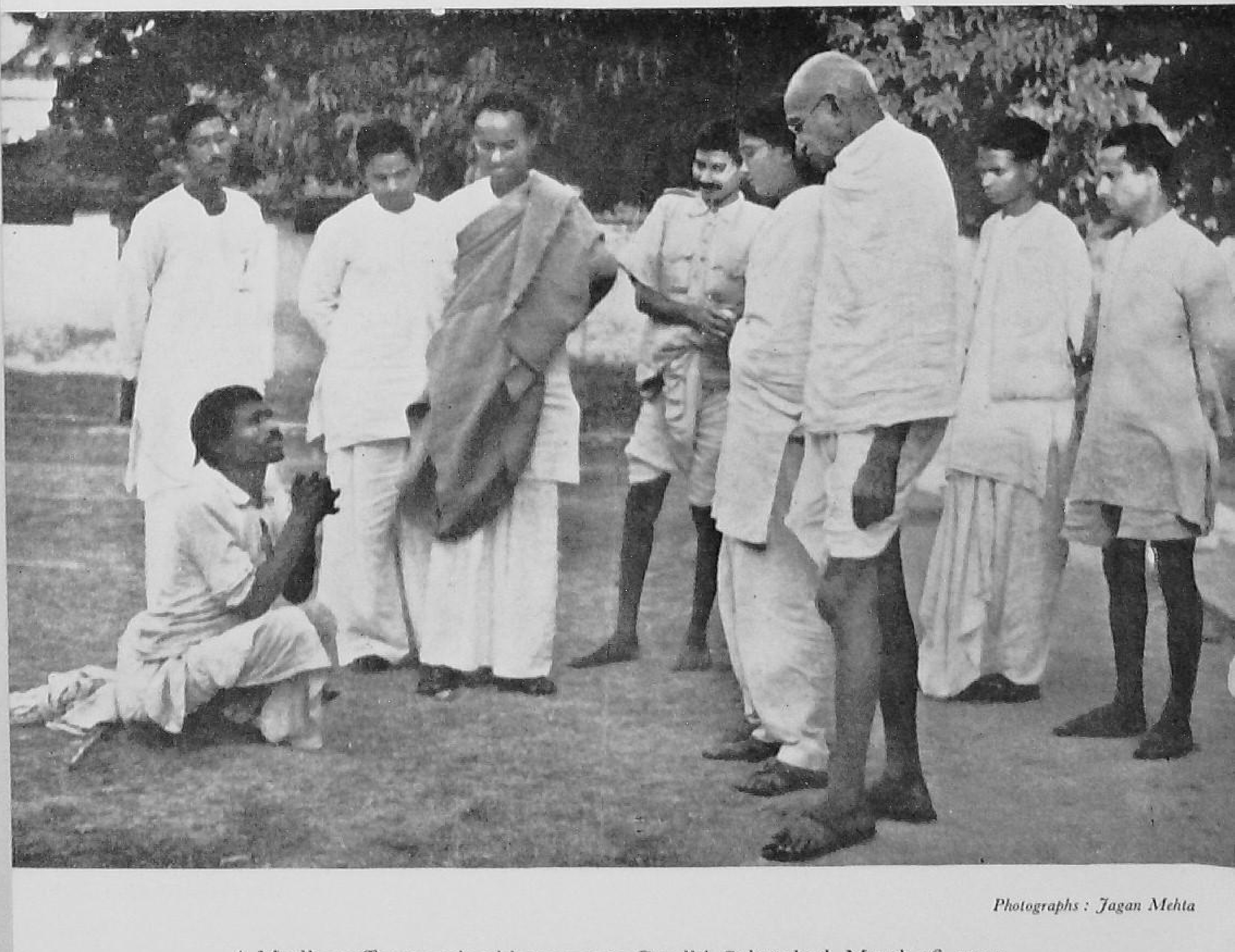
Courtesy : *Lady Mountbatten*

Gandhi's letter to Lord Mountbatten, dated Patna, March 26, 1947



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

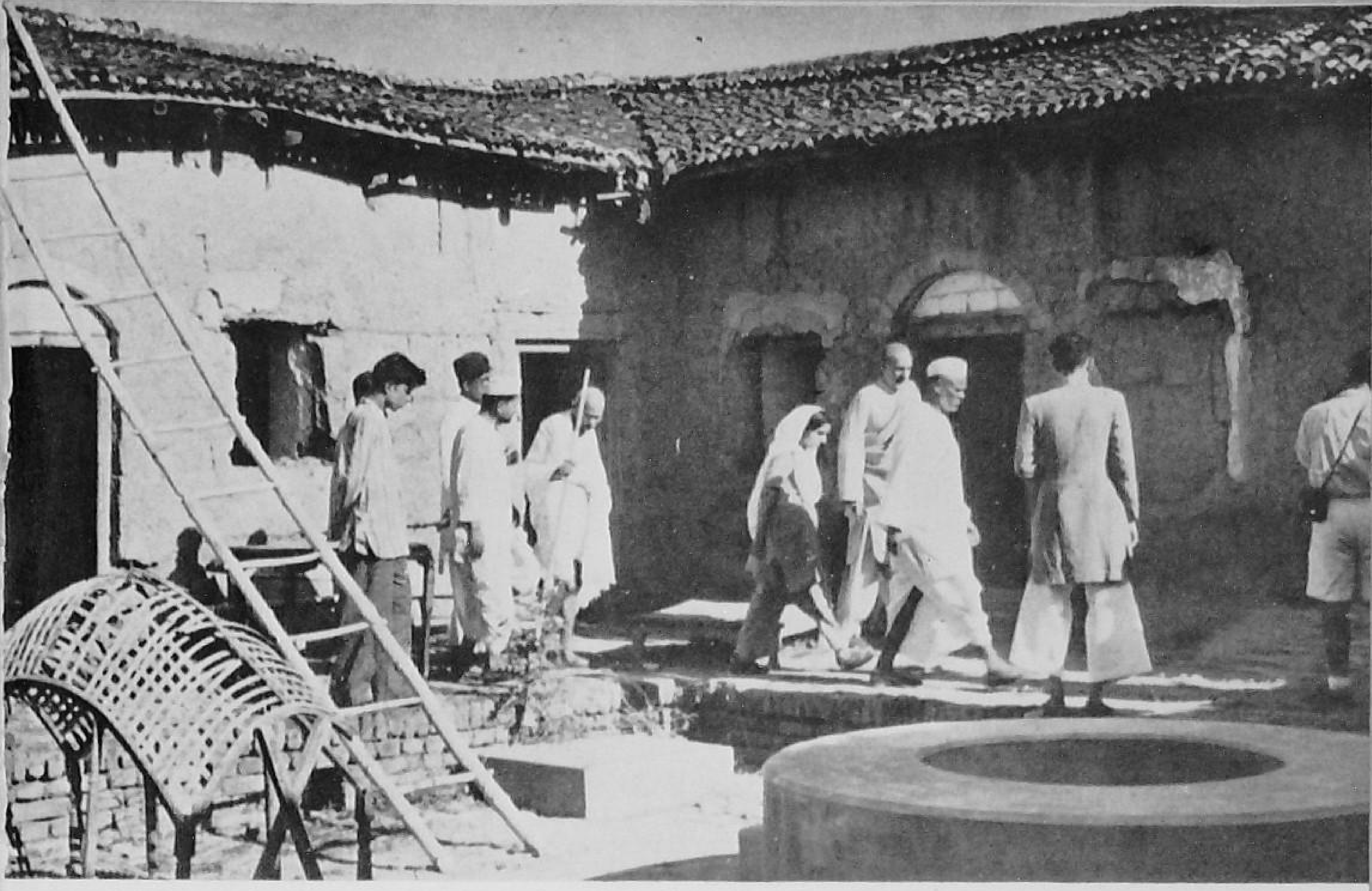
Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Gandhi's companion in Bihar, March 1947



*Photographs : Jagan Mehta*

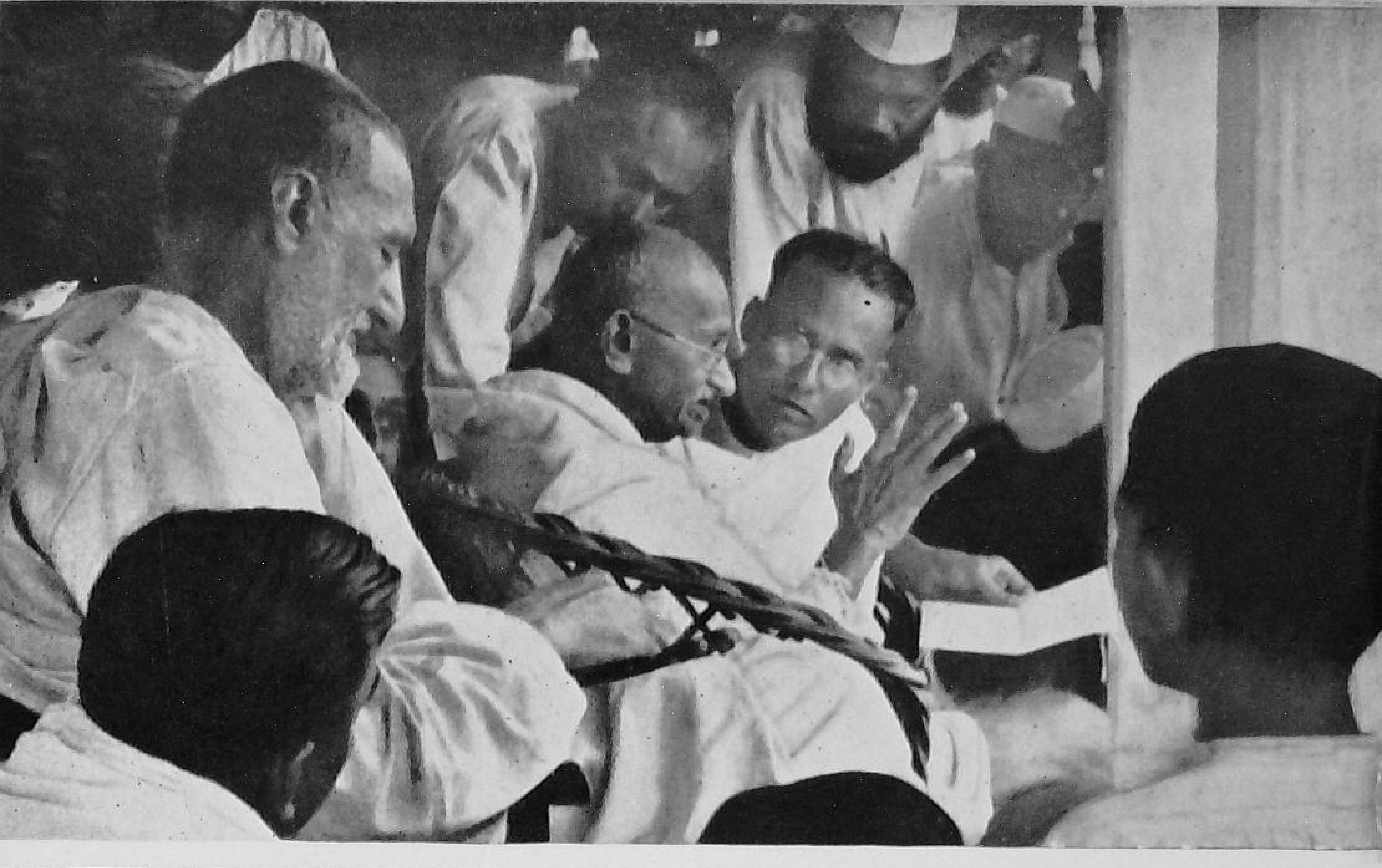
A Muslim sufferer paying his respect to Gandhi, Saiastabad, March 26, 1947

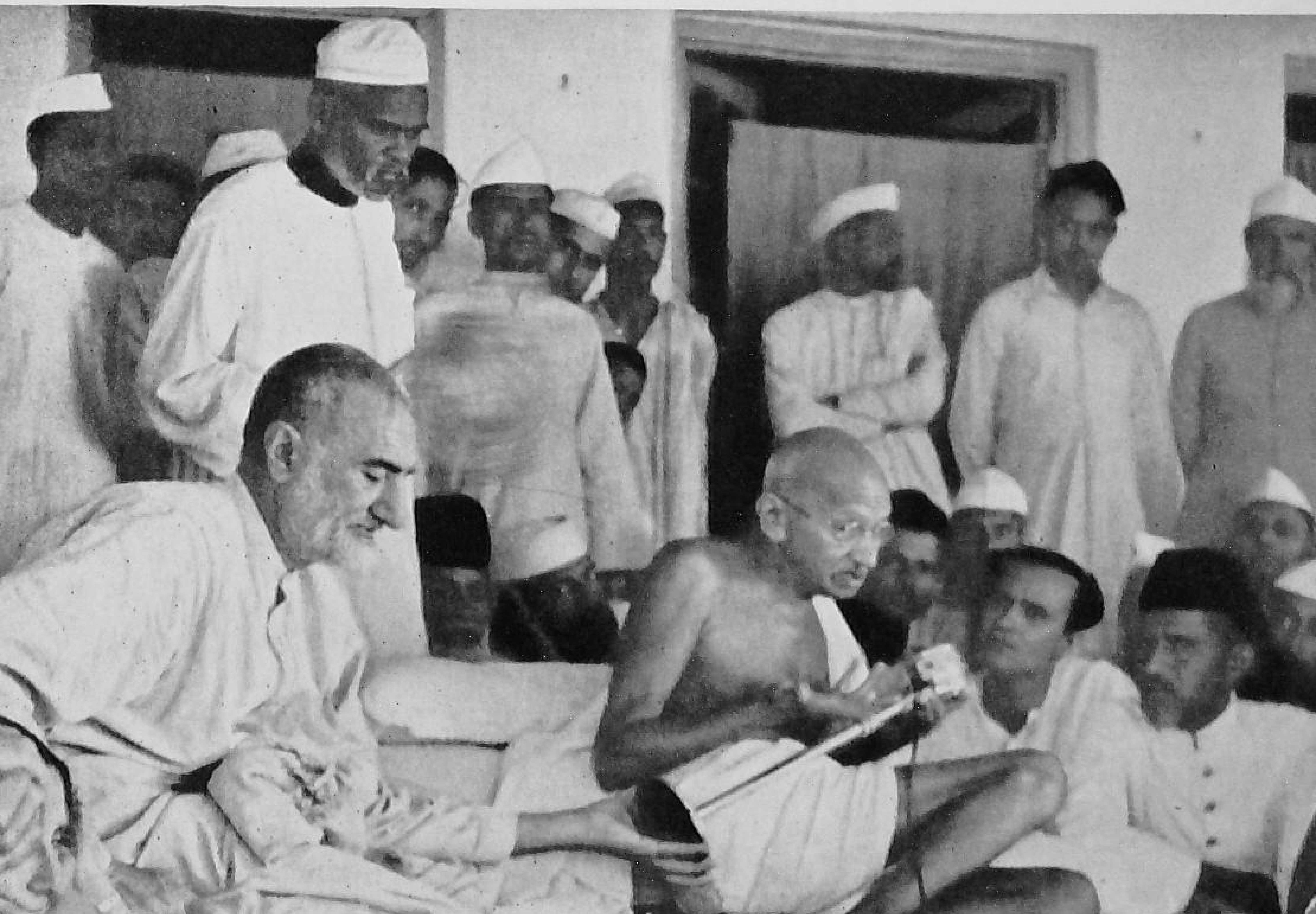
Talking to a blind villager who contributed to Bihar Relief Fund, March 26, 1947



*Photographs : Jagan Mehta*

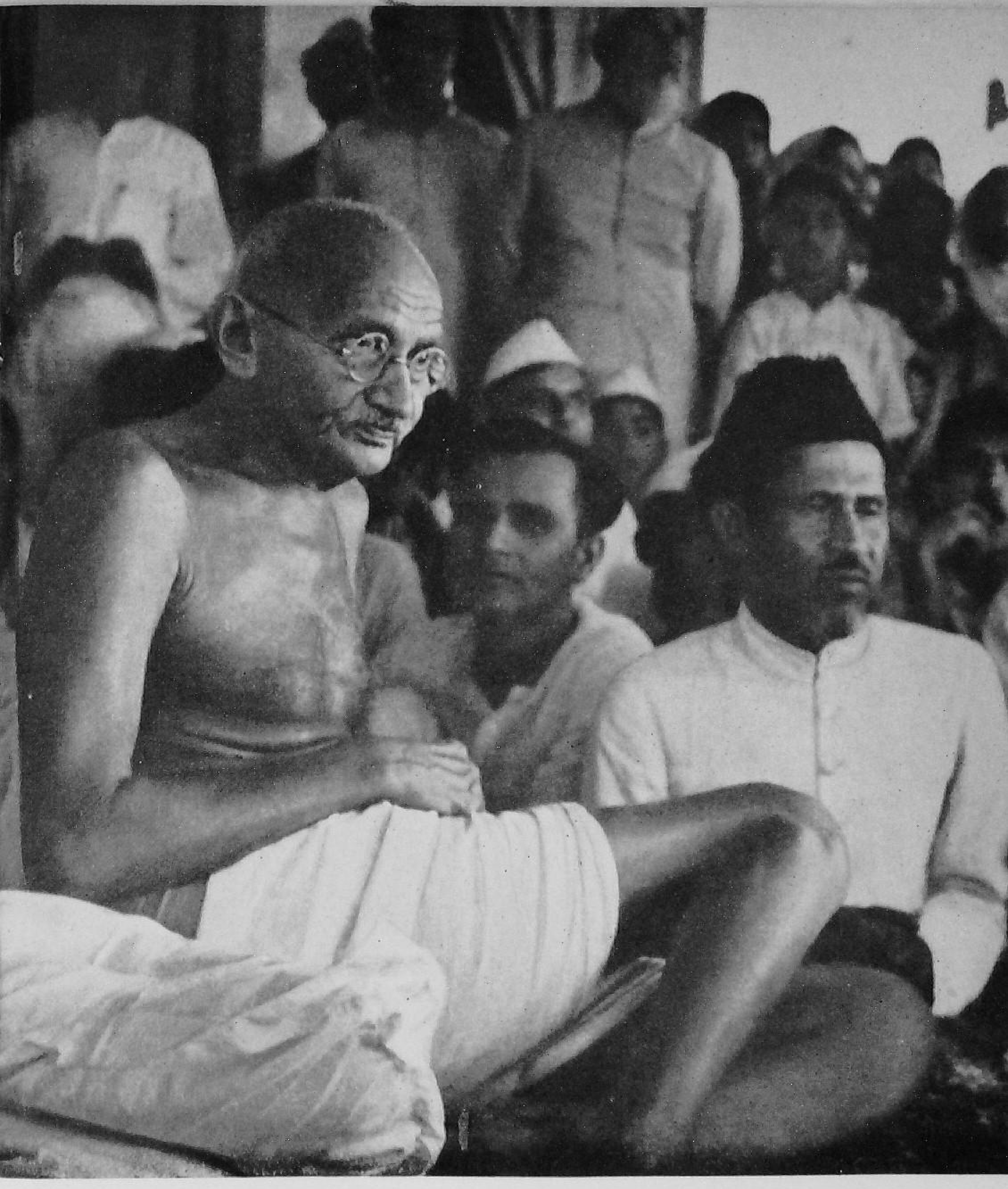
Visit to a deserted Muslim house, Bihar, March 27, 1947





*Photographs : Jagan Mehta*

With the sufferers at Ghosi, March 27, 1947
A meeting with Muslim Leaguers, Jahanabad, March 28, 1947

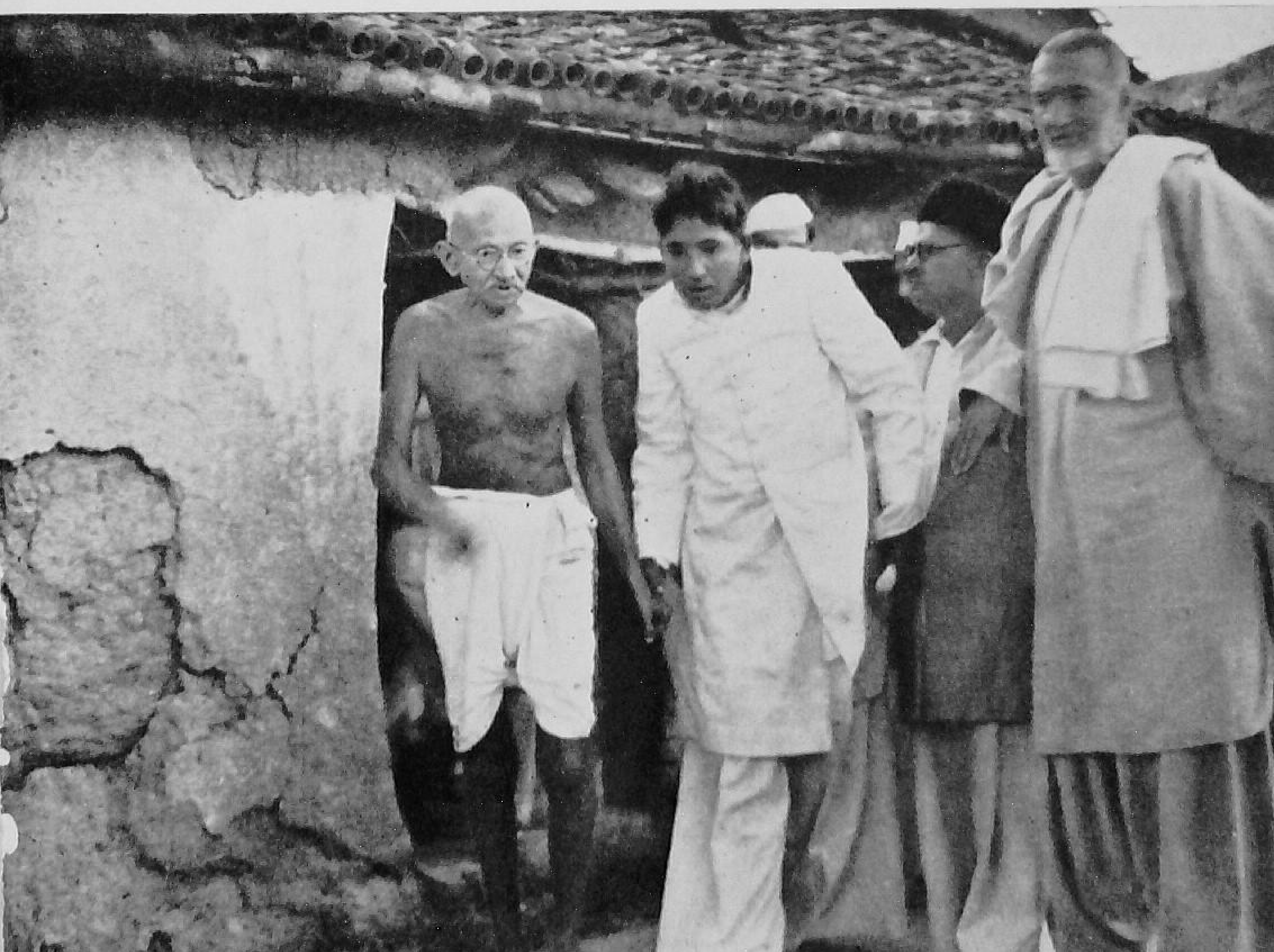


*Photograph : Jagan Mehta*

At Jahanabad, March 28, 1947

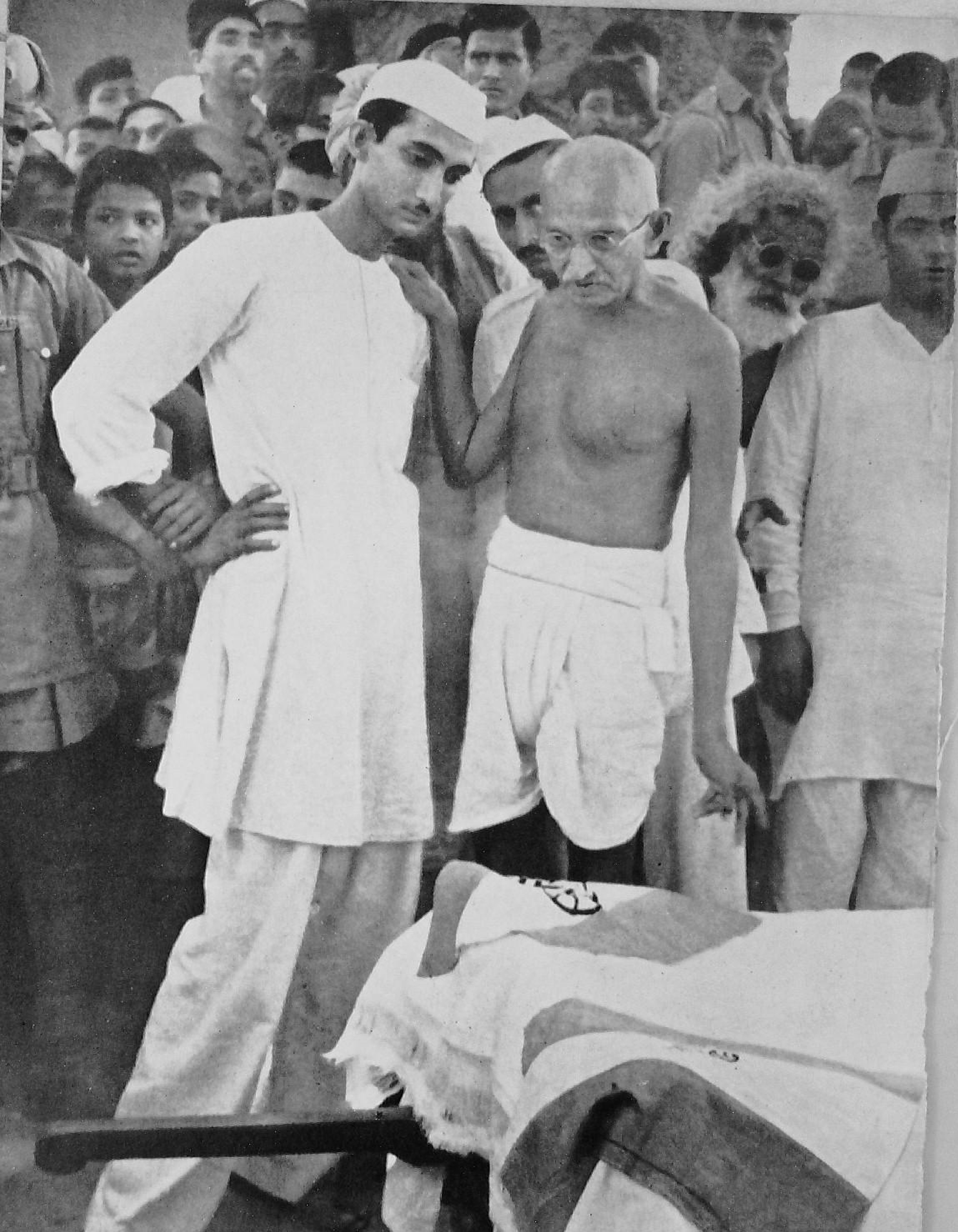
*Photograph : Jagan Mehta*

During the tour of Jahanabad, March 28, 1947



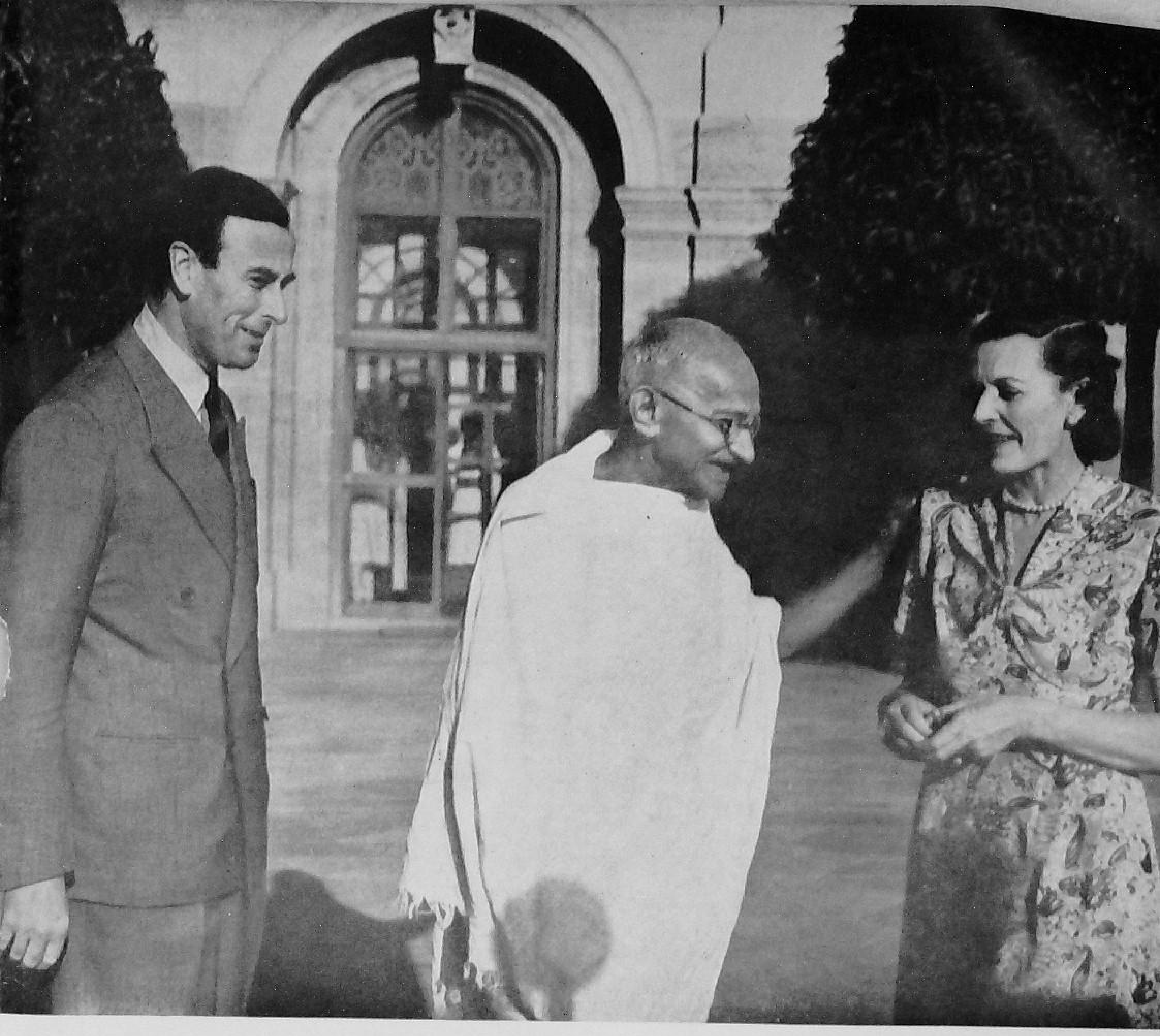
*Photographs : Jagan Mehta*

In the affected area of Bela, March 28, 1947



Photograph : Jagan Mehta

By the side of Abdul Bari's coffin, Patna, March 29, 1947



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

His first meeting with Lord and Lady Mountbatten, Delhi, March 31, 1947

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi entering the Viceregal Lodge for a conference, March 31, 1947

The next day, he went to see the Governor about an hour before the prayer time. He returned five minutes late to the prayer meeting. When he began his discourse, he first referred to the visit and said that the people might naturally be interested to learn why he had gone there. For him, this was a courtesy call, because he could not go expecting any favours or any services from the Governor, as before. Under a responsible government, which theirs was, services and favours he could expect only from the ministers, who were the representatives of the people. The Governor had undoubtedly some powers with reference to the minorities, but these too he could now exercise only with great restraint. What he discussed was for him to communicate to the ministers. One thing, however, he was free to reveal to the audience. To his agreeable surprise, the Governor had said that those who were responsible to the people had to begin with themselves. If they did not begin with their individual lives and showed relative perfection, they could not be the real reformers or servants of the people.

Gandhi then proceeded to relate his bitter experiences during the three short visits which he had paid to the neighbouring villages. It was very painful for him to find the homes in the same condition as when the miscreants had left them. If they wanted their Muslim neighbours to come back, it was necessary that the proper conditions should be restored and the debris completely cleared. Every individual who felt that it was his duty to make the return of the refugees smooth, could at once lend a hand in rendering the broken homes habitable once more.

He then told the audience what promises he had made on their behalf to the Muslim sufferers, who had come to him in the course of the day. He had assured them, in their name, that a repetition of the recent tragedy was impossible in Bihar. He had also assured a flourishing Muslim merchant that he should not be afraid of restarting his business in full confidence, for he was sure that the Bihari Hindus would honour that pledge.

The prayer gathering at Masurhi on March 17th numbered more than thirty thousand. Gandhi told them that his Bihar tour had not been undertaken for pleasure, but on account of serious and grave reasons. He would visit those places where Muslims had suffered. His appeal to the Hindus was to show real repentance by means of worthy and suitable acts.

During the mad days of November, women and children were remorselessly murdered, while men had also been done to death in such numbers, as to put Noakhali in the shade, although the events there had been of a sufficiently serious character. He expected the Hindus of Bihar to show true repentance and not merely to shout "jai" in his name. He not only expected the Hindus to contribute liberally towards the relief fund, but what he expected them to do more was that they should come forward and confess at least to him the wrongs that they had done. For, this alone could bring him true peace of mind.

The following day, Gandhi spoke of his visit to Masurhi and described the wreckage that he had witnessed. He pointed out that he had read about the happenings in Masurhi in the Muslim League report which, he regretted to have to say, he had then believed to be grossly exaggerated. But he had to confess now that much of the description about Masurhi seemed to him to be borne out. And what one read, however honest it might be, was wholly different in effect from the actual sight. He was told that the tragedy occurred largely due to the excitement caused by the observance of Noakhali Day. He was told, too, that the Muslims of Bihar were perturbed by the talk that was going about the Punjab Day that was to be observed on March 23. He hoped that it was a mere rumour, which had no foundation in fact. Such an observance anywhere would mean a clear invitation for mutual slaughter between brother and brother. He had told the Muslim friends that if such a misfortune again took place in Bihar, he would want to perish in the flames. His incessant prayer to God was that He would not keep him alive to witness such an awful and disgraceful scene.

For the next two days, there were no prayer meetings, as Gandhi was much exhausted by his strenuous tours through the villages. On March 21st, he commenced his prayer address with a reference to his visit to Garahwan village, where men, women and children had all been brutally done to death and requested those assembled to sit in mournful silence in sympathy with the deceased. He asked them to consider for themselves why the innocent women and children had been killed. Was it to save any religion? No religion taught anyone to kill his neighbours. What was done was nothing but wanton destruction. He did not stop to think whether it was done from the motives of self interest or any other.

The houses which only a few months ago were full of life, were now desolate and everyone knew about it. But then what was to be done next? The people went to bathe in the Ganges, believing that their sins could thus be washed off. The ruins before them should remind them of the sin they had committed on helpless women and children and they should seek to expiate it by considering in what way they could redeem themselves. He told them that they should clean the ruined houses and make them neat and habitable. They should also express to their Muslim brethren their repentance for the past occurrences and persuade them to return to their villages, telling them that then alone they would have peace of mind. It was possible that the Muslims might turn round and ask how they could go back and live in the houses where their kith and kin had been done to death. Muslims, would be justified in saying so. But, if the guilty men or their relations could go to them with truly penitent hearts and assure them that what was past was past and would never be repeated, he was sure that even a stone heart would melt.

He then mentioned that about fifty persons, who were wanted in connection with the riot cases, had surrendered the day after his arrival at Masurhi. He welcomed it and hoped that others who had taken part in the riots would surrender to the proper authorities, making a clean breast of the crimes they had committed and taking whatever punishment might be given to them. If people had not the courage to surrender to the authorities, they could come to him or Badshah Khan with their confessions.

Lastly, he referred to the fear entertained by the Hindus of Noakhali about the preparations that were being made by the Muslims to observe Pakistan Day on the 23rd March. A friend from Khadi Pratisthan had also come to him and had explained to him that the situation in Noakhali was deteriorating. He said that he had told the friend that he would not be persuaded to leave his post in Bihar at the present juncture, for he believed that his mission, if fully successful in Bihar, would cast its effect on Bengal and perhaps on the rest of India. The Muslims of Bihar and the Hindus of Bengal should accept him as security for the safety of their life and their property from the hands of the communalists. He had come here to do or die. Therefore, there was no question of abandoning his post of duty, till the Hindus and the Muslims could assure him that they did not need his services.

Gandhi having returned to Patna on March 22, after six-day tour of the affected area in Masurhi, gave an account of his impressions at the prayer gathering. He expressed his satisfaction with the attitude of the villagers who were not only genuinely penitent over the past happenings, but were also willing to atone for the past in the manner he might suggest. And liberal contributions, as liberal as it could be in rural India, were made by the villagers for the relief of Muslims, and even when he drove in the car he was stopped and presented with purses. Besides the purses, he had also received letters from the villagers expressing their readiness and willingness to help in the rehabilitation of the Muslims. In a number of places, due to the bravery of the local Hindus, no incidents had occurred. He was told by the Muslims themselves that in the Dinapore sub-division no trouble had occurred.

Gandhi said that he had addressed the Muslim women refugees in the morning at Piplawan. He did not wish at present to enter into a description of the feelings of these women and their present condition. His heart was too full and he did not wish to shed tears. He only wanted to tell them how to repent. He tried as best as he could to console them and persuaded them to pick up courage and return to their villages, placing reliance on God. At this meeting he was told that the Muslim women and men dreaded the approach of March 23rd, as it had been reported that the Punjab Day would be observed in Bihar on that date. He had assured them that Bihar Government had banned the observance of any kind of day, be it the Pakistan Day or the Punjab Day. The minister who was present also gave the assurance that no celebration of any kind whatsoever would be permitted and that the ban would be very strictly enforced throughout the province. The Government of Bihar had banned the kisan rally as well. In his opinion, that was rightly done. The present atmosphere in the country was such that any kind of rally or procession led to one kind of trouble or the other. In the language of the Gita, very often action lay in inaction, and inaction in action. Thus in modern warfare, very often inactivity was obligatory and it could, therefore, be described as real activity, and at such a time any activity, so called, would savour of criminality. He would, therefore, urge both the Hindus and the Muslims to refrain from celebrating these days. A true satyagrahi should implicitly obey the directions of those he had himself put in power. What he said did not refer

only to March 23rd. It applied to the future as well and at no time should these celebrations be indulged in, so long as the atmosphere remained as it was that day.

On March 23, his weekly silence having commenced, his written message in Hindustani was read out to the prayer congregation. It was his earnest prayer that those who were present and those others whom his voice could reach should understand the aim of life. The aim of life was that they should serve the Power that had created them, and on whose mercy or consent depended their very breath, by heartily serving its creation. That meant love, not hate, which one saw everywhere today. They had forgotten that aim and were either actually fighting each other, or were preparing for that fight. If they could not escape that calamity, they should regard India's independence as an impossible dream. If they thought they would get independence by the simple fact of the British power quitting the land, they were sadly mistaken. The British were leaving India. But if they continued fighting one another, then some other power or powers would step in. If they thought they could fight the whole world with its weapons, it was a folly.

On March 26, he referred to his visit to Kako Relief Camp and Saistabad village. Men and women burst into tears as they saw him. He said that to break under one's sorrow did not become the brave people. All religions taught that sorrow should be bravely borne.

As he watched the crowds of sturdy men pursuing him, catching hold of his car and shouting "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai", he could well imagine the havoc they must have wrought, when they attacked a handful of Muslims. The Hindus should be ashamed of the act. They should take a vow never to slip into that madness again. Nor should they think of taking revenge for the incidents of the Punjab or the like. Would they themselves become beasts, simply because the others happened to sink to that level? If ever they became mad again, they should destroy him first. His prayer in that case would be that God may give him the strength to pray to Him to forgive his murderers, that is, to purify their hearts. He prayed that God may enable him to show by example what true bravery was. No one could mistake arson and murder of innocent women and children as a brave act. It was cowardice of the meanest type.

In his prayer speech at Okri village on March 27, he uttered a warning that Indians might lose the golden apple of independence

which was almost within their grasp, out of their insanity, which had caused the scenes of desolation and destruction and added that the peace that reigned in the land was only on the surface.

Gandhi reminded them of the very first pronouncement of Lord Mountbatten, that he was sent as the last Viceroy to wind up British rule in India. They must have noticed that the pronouncement was deliberate, unconditional and unequivocal. He knew that it had become a fashion, although not without cause, to distrust every British declaration. He for one would advise the acceptance of every declaration at its face value, without qualifying it in the light of the past experience to the contrary. His own experience was that it was the deceiver who always lost and never the dupe, if he was honest and brave. But he very much feared on account of what had happened in the country that by their folly or, what was worse than that, insanity, they might let slip out of their hands their hard-won prize, before it was strongly locked in their unbreakable fist.

Gandhi referred to Bihar and the Punjab tragedy and exclaimed that he had wisdom enough to see that they themselves might tempt the Viceroy to eat his own words, uttered solemnly on the solemn occasion. Heaven forbid that such an occasion should arise, but, if it did, even though his might be a voice in the wilderness, he would declare that the Viceroy should firmly and truly carry out his own declaration and complete the British withdrawal.

Mentioning the police strike Gandhi said that the police, like the scavengers, should never go on strike. Theirs was an essential service and they should render that service, irrespective of pay. There were many other effective and honourable means of getting the grievances redressed. If he were a cabinet minister, he would offer the strikers nothing whatever under the threat of a strike, which implied force. He would give them the choice of an impartial arbitration, without any condition. He hoped that the police would call off their strike unconditionally, and request Bihar ministry to appoint an impartial arbitrator to investigate their case.

He expressed regret that the Bihar Government had employed the British soldiers to deal with the strikers. No matter what the cause was, and wherever it was, Indian governments must never requisition the service of the British soldiers to deal with civil disturbances. Otherwise, it would mean that the Indian governments were helpless without the British arms.

On March 29 he said that he would be leaving for Delhi the next day and hoped to return in about four or five days.

He then feelingly spoke on the death of Professor Bari, under tragic circumstances. Bari was a disciple and co-worker of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Dr. Rajendra Prasad had built for himself a unique and an indisputed position and influence in that province by his service and sacrifice. Bari also has by his service in the cause of the workers in Jamshedpur and other places endeared himself to people and rose to occupy the position of the president of the provincial Congress committee. A fearless fighter, Bari, had been with Congress during the different phases of its struggle for freedom.

Gandhi referred to his visit earlier in the day to Professor Bari's house to console the members of the bereaved family and to wean them from weeping and hearten them for the work that specially descended upon the weak shoulders of his children. He said that as he entered the house, he was struck with its simplicity and the simple life Professor Bari had led. The house was located in an ordinary narrow lane and what he saw inside the house fully bore out what everyone had said about Bari, that he was a poor man and that, though he had opportunities, he scrupulously maintained his integrity as far as the public finances were concerned. At a time, when the administration of the country was in Congress hands and crores of rupees had to be administered, men of Professor Bari's honesty would have been of invaluable help. He had hoped, on his return from the third tour just finished, to be more and more associated with Bari and make an effective appeal to him to modify, if not altogether get rid of his short temper, which went ill with the very high office, in fact, the highest in the province of Bihar, especially when there was a nationalist ministry at the head of affairs, which naturally had to be influenced by the premier provincial Congress organization. He had full faith in Professor Bari and he knew that his word carried great weight with him. But God had willed otherwise and He had deprived Bihar of the great service of a very brave man with the heart of a fakir. But men like Professor Bari never died and it was for those who remained to carry on the noble work he had left behind.

He further described the circumstances of Bari's death and said that, in an unfortunate altercation that ensued between him and one Gurkha member of the anti-smuggling force and a former member

of the Indian National Army, the latter shot him. He warned the audience that there was no politics of any kind in Bari's death and that it would be wrong and unjustified to associate the whole I.N.A. organization with the death of Professor Bari because of what one single individual did.

On the eve of Gandhi's departure to Delhi, a meeting was held at a refugee camp in Bihar. While replying to a series of grievances set forth in the written memoranda, which were submitted to him by the local Muslim refugees, he said:

"As far as possible, I have refrained from discussing the affairs in Noakhali in my speeches. But whenever I have had an occasion to speak about Noakhali, I admit that I have spoken with the greatest restraint. Do the Muslims want that I should not speak about the sins committed by them in Noakhali and that I should only speak about the sins of Hindus in Bihar? If I do that, I will be a coward. To me, the sins of the Noakhali Muslims and the Bihar Hindus are of the same magnitude and equally condemnable."

Gandhi thereafter replying to a memorandum, which stated that the signatories had no confidence in the present ministry, said: "I told the Hindus of Noakhali, who also expressed such no confidence in Shaheed Suhrawardy, that they could not remove Shaheed Saheb from the ministry, as he was returned by the separate electorate system. So long as Shaheed Suhrawardy enjoys the confidence of the community he represents, no one can remove him. Similarly, how can you remove the ministers here, when they have been sent by the Hindu electorate? This unfortunate situation has been created by the communal electorate system which, you know, I have always condemned. Dr. Khan Sahib also said the same thing the other day that so long as he enjoyed the confidence of the Pathans there was no question of resignation. Moreover, what will happen if ministry goes out? There will again be the rule of bureaucratic government. That apart, I can take good work from these ministers as my relationship with them is most friendly."

Referring to the demand that fifty per cent of the officers and the constables put in charge of new thanas should be Muslims, he said: "I disapproved of the very same demand of the Noakhali Hindus. For, this demand cuts across my peace mission. If conceded, this will mean so many small Pakistans and a division of Bihar. And after all, wherever you live, you have to live by creating mutual goodwill and

friendly relations with your neighbours. Even the Qaid-e-Azam had once said that in the Pakistan areas, the majority must so behave as to win the confidence of the minority. In the same manner, I am urging upon Hindus here to win your confidence. Either Pakistan or Hindustan, whichever is established, it must be based on justice and fair play."

About another demand that the Muslims may be allowed to re-settle in certain exclusive areas, Gandhi said: "You cannot force the Government to keep you in certain exclusive areas. Could I tell that to Shaheed Suhrawardy for the Noakhali Hindus? I never gave any encouragement to the Noakhali Hindus for such a move. I told the Hindus of Noakhali that if they were afraid, they could go anywhere, provided they get adequate compensation. But I must tell you that it is not my heart's desire. Leaving your homestead in such a manner is nothing but cowardice. If the Government is not prepared to pay compensation, I should say it is unworthy of them and they cannot refuse it. Moreover, if the ministers who have been returned by the Hindu votes say that the Hindus have here gone beyond control, it is better for them to consume themselves in the flames of the Hindu rage, than continue in office. Government has to do justice and cannot afford injustice in any manner."

## *Message Of Asia*

1947

On April 1, 1947, Gandhi attended the Inter-Asian Relations Conference which was being held in the Purana Quila in Delhi. The Azerbaijan delegate, Mr. Yousouoff, who presided at the plenary session, requested Gandhi to say a few words. Gandhi told him that he would speak at the closing session of the conference on April 2; for the present, he would answer any questions that members might like to put to him.

"I will not like to live in this world, if it is not to be one. Certainly I should like to see this dream realized in my lifetime," said Gandhi in answer to the question, whether he believed in the theory of one world and whether it would succeed under the present conditions. He further remarked: "I hope that all the representatives who have come here from the different Asian countries will strive their level best to have only one world. They will have to think out ways and means for achieving this goal. If you work with fixed determination, there is no doubt that, in our own generation, we will certainly realize this dream."

Dr. Han Liwu from China addressing Gandhi, as the "Spirit of India" and "Light of Asia," asked him his views on the proposal to set up an Asian institute. Gandhi said:

"The question is certainly very nice. Let me confess my ignorance. I have really to apologize to you. Pandit Nehru had asked me long before this conference was scheduled to take place, whether it would at all be possible for me to attend it. This has proved to be a much more important conference than it was expected to be. I was obliged to say at that time that I was very sorry and, would not be able to come. When Lord Mountbatten, the new Viceroy, invited me to meet him, however, I could not say 'No'. It would have been foreign to my nature to do so. The Viceroy had already told me that the credit for bringing me to Delhi during the Asian

Conference was really his. And I had told the Viceroy: 'I am your prisoner. But I am also Pandit Nehru's prisoner, for, after all, he is your Vice-President.'

"Through correspondence, I know almost all parts of the world and naturally, therefore, of Asia too, though I know very few of you personally—perhaps none of you. I am doubtful whether I can say anything useful, but the question is one after my heart. Some portions of the question put to me now were discussed by Pandit Nehru yesterday. It is a great event that, for the first time in our history, such a conference takes place on the Indian soil. I am sorry that I have to refer to the conditions that we see today. We do not know how to keep peace between ourselves. We have so many differences which we cannot settle between ourselves in a humane and friendly manner. We think we must resort to the law of the jungle. It is an experience which I would not like you to carry to your respective countries. I would instead like you to bury it here.

"India is now on the eve of her full independence. India wants to be independent of everybody who wants to own this country. We do not want a change of masters. We want to be the masters on our own soil, though I am not quite sure how it will come about. All that we know is that we should do our own duty and leave the results in the hands of God and not in the hands of man. Man is supposed to be the maker of his own destiny. It is partly true. He can make his destiny only in so far as he is allowed by the Great Power which overrides all our intentions, all our plans, and carries out His own plans.

"I call that Great Power not by the name of Allah, not by the name of Khuda or God, but by the name of Truth. For me, Truth is God, and Truth overrides our plans. The whole truth is only embodied within the heart of that Great Power—Truth. I was taught from my early days to regard Truth as unapproachable, as something that you cannot reach. A great Englishman taught me to believe that God is unknowable. He is knowable, but knowable only to the extent that our limited intellect allows.

"You, gentlemen, have come here from different parts of Asia, and having come with eagerness and zest, you should all have yearly meetings or, two-yearly or three-yearly conferences. You should all carry away sweet memories of the meetings and make every effort to build the great edifice of Truth.

"All the Asian representatives have come together. Is it in order to wage a war against Europe, against America or against the non-Asiatics? I say most emphatically 'No'. This is not India's mission. I am free to confess that I will feel very sorry, if India, having won her independence through essentially and predominantly non-violent means, was going to use that independence for the suppression of the other parts of the world. Europeans had exploited different races inhabiting this vast continent called Asia.

"And it will be a sorry thing, if we go away from this conference without a fixed determination that Asia shall live, and live as free as every other western nation. I just wanted to say that conferences like the present one should meet regularly, and if you ask me where, India is the place."

The closing session of the Inter-Asian Relations Conference held on April 2 was a great finale to the intense activity which marked the proceedings during the past ten days. Over 20,000 visitors and delegates and observers gave a great ovation to Gandhi, when Mrs. Naidu introduced him as "one of the greatest Asians of the age." Gandhi who followed Dr. Sjahriar, the Premier of Indonesia, addressing the gathering said:

"I do not think that I should apologize to you for having to speak in a foreign tongue. I wonder if this loud speaker carries my voice to the farthest end of this vast audience. If some of those who are far away are unable to listen to what I may say, it will be the fault of the loud speaker.

"I was going to tell you that I do not wish to apologize. I dare not. You cannot understand the provincial language, which is my mother tongue. I do not want to insult you by speaking in my own language Gujarati. Our national speech is Hindustani. I know that it will be a long time before it can be made into an international speech. For international commerce, undoubtedly, English occupies the first place. I used to hear that French was the language of diplomacy. I was told, when I was young, that if I wanted to go from one end of Europe to the other, I must try to pick up French. I tried to learn French, in order that I may be able to make myself understood. There is a rivalry between the French and the English. Having been taught English, I have naturally to resort to it.

"I was wondering, as to what I was to speak to you. I wanted to collect my thoughts, but, let me confess to you that I had no time.

Yet I had promised yesterday that I would try to say a few words. While I was coming with Badshah Khan, I asked for a little piece of paper and pencil. I got a pen, instead of a pencil. I tried to scribble a few words. You will be sorry to hear that that piece of paper is not by my side, though I remember what I wanted to say.

"You, friends, have not seen the real India and you are not meeting in conference in the midst of real India. Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Lahore—all these are big cities and they are, therefore, influenced by the West.

"I then thought of a story. It was in French and was translated for me by an Anglo-French philosopher. He was an unselfish man. He befriended me without having known me, because he always sided with the minorities. I was not then in my own country. I was not only in a hopeless minority, but in a despised minority, if the Europeans in South Africa will forgive me for saying so. I was a coolie lawyer. At that time, we had no coolie doctors, and we had no coolie lawyers. I was the first in the field. You know, perhaps, what is meant by the word 'coolie'.

"This friend—his mother was a French woman and his father was an Englishman—said: 'I want to translate for you a French story. There were three scientists who went out from France in search of truth. They went to different parts of Asia. One of them found his way to India. He began to search. He went to the so-called cities of those times—naturally this was before British occupation, before even the Mogul period. He saw the so-called high caste people, men and women, till he felt at a loss. Finally, he went to one humble cottage in a humble village. That cottage was a bhangi cottage and there he found the truth that he was in search of.'

"If you really want to see India at its best, you have to find it in the humble bhangi homes of such villages. There are seven lakhs of such villages, and thirty-eight crores of people inhabit them.

"If some of you see the Indian villages, you will not be fascinated by the sight. You will have to scratch below the dung heap. I do not pretend to say that they were ever places of paradise. Today, they are really dung heaps. They were not like that before. What I say is not from history, but from what I have seen myself. I have travelled from one end of India to the other, and I have seen the miserable specimens of humanity with the lustreless eyes. They are India. In these humble cottages, in the midst of these dung heaps,

are to be found humble bhangis, in whom you find the concentrated essence of wisdom.

"Again, I have learnt from books—the books written by English historians. We read books written in English by English historians, but we do not write in our own mother tongue, or in the national language Hindustani. We study our history through English books, rather than through originals. That is the cultural conquest which India has undergone."

He asserted that wisdom had come to the West from the East:

"The first of these wise men was Zoroaster. He belonged to the East. Zoroaster was followed by Buddha who belonged to the East, India. Who followed Buddha? Jesus, who came from the East. Before Jesus was Moses who belonged to Palestine, though he was born in Egypt. And after Jesus came Mahomed. I omit my reference to Krishna and Rama and other lights. I do not call them lesser lights but they are less known to the literary world. All the same, I do not know a single person in the world to match these men of Asia. And then what happened? Christianity became disfigured, when it went to the West. I am sorry to have to say that. I would not talk any further.

"I have told you the story, in order to make you understand that what you see in the big cities is not the real India. Certainly, the carnage that is going on before our very eyes is a shameful thing. As I said yesterday, do not carry the memory of that carnage beyond the confines of India.

"What I want you to understand is the message of Asia. It is not to be learnt through the western spectacles or by imitating the atom bomb. If you want to give a message to the West, it must be the message of love and the message of truth. I do not want merely to appeal to your head. I want to capture your heart.

"In this age of democracy, in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can re-deliver this message with the greatest emphasis. You will complete the conquest of the West, not through vengeance, because you have been exploited, but with real understanding. I am sanguine, if all of you put your hearts together—not merely heads—to understand the secret of the message these wise men of the East have left to us, and if we really become worthy of that great message, the conquest of the West will be completed. This conquest will be loved by the West itself.

"The West is today pining for wisdom. It is despairing of a multiplication of the atom bombs, because the atom bombs mean utter destruction, not merely of the West, but of the whole world, as if the prophecy of the Bible is going to be fulfilled and there is to be a perfect deluge. It is up to you to tell the world of its wickedness and sin—that is the heritage your teachers and my teachers have taught Asia."

Sarojini Naidu in her closing address said: "You have heard the message from the lips of the great apostle of love and truth. He is feeble today, he is bent and tired with the tragic pilgrimage of his to solace the bleeding hearts of the sufferers in Bengal and Bihar. But with that frail body, those tired limbs, and that old, almost inaudible voice, Gandhi it is who says: Love and forgive, love and create, love and be free. This is the message of India, my children, my brothers, my sisters, my daughters; take that message of Gandhi to your country."

The various Asian delegations came to Gandhi to ask for a message of hope. To the Tibetans, Gandhi said that it was their duty to revive the message of the immortal Buddha. He sympathized with the Arabs, but he asked them to treat the Jews with love and understanding and to get them to subserve the Arab interests. He asked the Jews to abstain from their terrorist movement. He sympathized with them too, but he was quite sure that they could get nowhere with violence. To the Indonesians and to the Vietnamese again, it was the message of non-violence. Whatever was gained by the sword was likely to perish by the sword and nothing permanent could be built on force.

That evening, for the second successive day, Gandhi abandoned his evening prayer. When he was about to start the prayer, he asked the audience if there was anyone present who intended objecting to the recitation from the Koran, as a person objected to it the day before. Two or three persons from among the gathering objected to it and asked him on what authority he could recite the verses from the Koran in a Hindu temple.

Gandhi said that the temple belonged to the bhangi community who did not object to the manner in which he conducted prayers; and as a bhangi, he had a right to pray in the temple as he wished. Those who objected to the recitation from the Koran, were neither bhangis, nor would they like to become bhangis.

Although most of the people in the prayer meeting assured him of their willingness to hear the prayer, Gandhi refused to conduct it and said that he would again concede victory to the few objectors, but this certainly was not a victory for the Hindu religion. He added that the following day he would again ask the same question and await a reply.

When someone referred to the plight of the Hindus in the Punjab, he said that hot words could not wipe the tears of the Punjab and that whatever power he had was dedicated to the service of sufferers in the Punjab, Bihar and Noakhali.

Before starting the prayers on April 3, Gandhi revealed that he had received a letter asking him either to discontinue recitations from the Koran or to leave the Valmiki temple. He asked the audience, if there was any one among them who objected to recitation of verses from the Koran. When some raised their hands and said that they would not allow him to pray, if the verses from the Koran were recited, Gandhi decided not to hold the prayers.

In the course of his speech, he asked the audience if they really had understood the beauty and truth of what had been said on the previous day. He said that he was not one to refrain from doing what he held to be his duty, but his non-violence dictated that, even if a mere boy objected to his holding the prayer meeting, he would refrain from doing so. But this should in no way be interpreted as cowardice. He did not hold prayers, in order to prevent argument and violence. Violence, he said, was the work of the devil and all his life he had fought against it.

Gandhi added that he would request those who were against his holding the prayer meeting not to come, or, if they did come, they should come by themselves and kill him, if they wanted to. Even if he was killed, he would not give up repeating the name of Rama and Rahim, which meant to him the same God. With these names on his lips, he would die cheerfully. If he refrained from repeating the name of Rama and Rahim, how could he face the Hindus of Noakhali and the Muslims of Bihar.

He asked those who wanted the prayer to be held not to entertain anger or malice towards the obstructionists, but to pity them. Anger and desire for revenge were no service to Hinduism.

When the two sections of the audience began to quarrel among themselves, as he was about to leave, Gandhi addressed the crowd

for about fifteen minutes standing. He said that anger would lead them nowhere. People should think how best they could heal the wounds of the Punjab; and not abuse anybody, as this was against their religion.

After three days' break, Gandhi conducted his prayer on April 4. He commenced by asking whether there were any objectors on the prayer ground. A Hindu Mahasabha member asked to be allowed to say a few words of apology for the occurrence of the last three days. He wished to dissociate himself and the fellow members from this behaviour. The prayer ground was not the place for disagreement. If they had to fight any issue with him, they should do so outside. He appealed to the audience to be quiet, and let the prayer proceed without let or hindrance.

There was only one person who objected to the prayers with a verse from the Koran being held in a Hindu temple. Gandhi said that it was an objection which only the Harijans of this place could raise. The obstructionist then withdrew his objection. The Harijans of the place, Gandhi proceeded, were sad at the happenings of the last three days. They were his younger brothers. He was a bhangi and it was the duty of a true bhangi and, therefore, a true Hindu to cleanse not only the dirt of the body, but also all the pollution of the mind and the spirit. The true Hindu saw truth in every religion. The essence of the Koran verse was found in every religion.

He told them how visitors from Rawalpindi had that day come and narrated the atrocities that had been perpetrated there. They wanted his service, help and guidance. They could not understand the objection raised here to the recital of the Koran verse. Even the Muslims had never stopped the holding of prayers, though some of them objected to the recital of the verse in question.

The Vedas, Gandhi said, were from time immemorial. So were the Upanishads. But they were imperfectly known. Any impurities that had crept in any of the scriptures were due to the fact that the scriptures were written many years later. The Hindu religion was a great religion and had infinite toleration in it and power of absorption. God was everywhere, as the Harijan woman saint told her young questioner. God was the ruler of men's hearts. He only wanted single-minded worship in whatsoever form it be, and whatsoever language. It was, therefore, wholly un-Hindu and irreligious to object to the great verse from the Koran being recited.

The full prayer was then held. After the prayer, he addressed the gathering again. He said that it had hurt him much to think that on three days, they had not been able to hold prayers and hundreds had been disappointed, because of the unenlightened objection of a few. But, if prayer had been in their hearts, they really had not missed the worship. He himself was grateful to the objectors, because they had given him ample opportunity for heart-searching. He had asked himself whether, because he had not been able to calm them, there was anything against them in his heart. If they had understood the inner meaning of the *bhajan* sung that day, they should have understood that it was right for them to take everything that came from God as a gift. He felt glad that he had gone through the test. Even if three or four had said that they would kill him for saying Rama and Rahim in the same breath, he hoped he would die smiling with those very names on his lips.

Gandhi went on to say how in Noakhali it was difficult to have the Ramdhun, but there too he was able to continue his customary worship. All would be well, if there was no anger or malice in their hearts. How could it be a sin to chant God's name in Arabic? He implored the people not to degrade Hinduism by not understanding their immortal scriptures. Everyone should be at liberty to pray as he liked.

Some people imagined that he was engaged in big tasks here and therefore, he had forgotten the suffering areas. God alone knew how his heart wept and what agony he suffered at the madness the people had indulged in Noakhali, Bihar and now in the Punjab. He assured them that he was working for those areas, wherever he was, even in his talks with the Viceroy. There was no bigger task for him than to strive for the Hindu-Muslim unity. He could not serve India, if he forgot Noakhali, Bihar or the Punjab. He claimed to be a servant of God. He neither ate nor drank, nor he did anything else, except at the bidding of God. They would, perhaps, understand his work better in the fullness of time. Meantime, he must continue his duty wherever God took him.

Before commencing the evening prayer on April 5, Gandhi again asked whether there was anyone amongst the gathering who would rather that he did not conduct the customary prayer. No objectors were there and he was glad. He reminded them once again of the folly of looking upon one religion as better than another. The recent

happenings were due to the atmosphere of hate that pervaded the land today. If they remained calm in the midst of the storm, then only would they grow in strength.

He reminded the audience that the next day was the beginning of the National Week. He related how the thought of a twenty-four hours' fast had come to him one night in a dream, how notices had been issued at once, and what a widespread and hearty response there had been to the call. He had never dreamt that the country had been so awakened, and by the country he meant not the few cities of India, but the seven lakhs of villages, where the vast mass of Indian humanity lived. He appealed to the audience to respond to the call once again, but only if they understood its implications. The fast was undertaken in those days for the sake of vindicating swaraj through the Hindu-Muslim unity and the spinning wheel. Today alas! all that the Congress Tricolour stood for, namely, the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity and the spinning wheel were nowhere to be found, except in his humble hut. He, however, asked the people, in any event, to contemplate on what internal strife meant, to forgive and forget what had happened, and to bear no malice in their hearts for all the tragic and bestial happenings of Noakhali, Bihar and the Punjab. He still believed more strongly than ever that the spinning wheel was the truest symbol of non-violence. The spinning wheel was the one thing that never failed through its music to give solace to the mind and soothe the troubled heart. If, therefore, they truly desired to extinguish the volcano of hatred that was that day pouring out its poisonous lava, he hoped they would join him in fasting in the true spirit. The fast signified much more than processions and flag-hoisting ceremonies.

The whole of India, Gandhi said, could be a Pakistan, if people looked upon every fellow Indian as a brother. If Hindustan meant a land only for the Hindus, and Pakistan meant a land only for the Muslims, Pakistan and Hindustan would then be the lands flowing with poison. The land of his dreams, he said, was a land watered by rivers of love.

Addressing the prayer meeting on April 6, he drew their attention to the Bengali *bhajan* to which they had been treated that evening as also to the Ramdhun which included the names of both Rama and Rahim, Krishna and Karim. As these were being sung, he said, the vistas of Noakhali came before his eyes. That *bhajan* was often

sung there. Sometimes, it was sung and the Ramdhun was chanted, as they walked from village to village.

That day was the first day of National Week—a day of fasting and prayer. There was sacrificial spinning also in which Nehru and other leaders took part. The fast would soon be broken, but how good it would be, if the names of Rama and Rahim, and message of the *bhajan* were engraved in their hearts for all time, as a result of that day's re-dedication. He went on to say how some people abused him, how some thought that he had grown too big even to reply to their letters and how the others accused him of enjoying himself in Delhi, while the Punjab was in flames. How could these persons understand that he was working day and night for them, wherever he was? He could not dry their tears. God alone could do that, but he would go at once to the Punjab, when the call came. It grieved him to sense the existing hatred and spirit of revenge, and warned them that, unless they calmed and purified their hearts, they would light such a fire throughout the land, as would consume them all. He reminded them of the story of the Mahabharata, which was not a history of India but of man. It was the story of the fight between the worshippers of Rama, the embodiment of good, and Ravana, the embodiment of evil. They fought—the Pandavas and Kauravas—blood-brothers, and what was the result? While evil was certainly defeated, only seven of the victors remained to tell the tale. This was the state of the country today.

Gandhi exhorted the audience to pause and to think where they were drifting. He begged of the Hindus not to harbour any anger in their hearts against the Muslims, even if the latter wanted to destroy them. None should fear death. Death was inevitable for every human being. But if they died smiling, they would enter into a new life, they would create a new Hindustan. The second chapter of the Gita described in its ending *shlokas*, how the god-fearing man should live and move and have his being. He wanted them all to read, mark and learn and inwardly digest the meaning of every one of those *shlokas*. They would then realize what their ideals were and how far short of them they had fallen today. On the eve of independence, it was their duty to ask themselves, whether they were fit to have it and sustain it.

On April 7, Gandhi told the prayer audience that he continued to receive letters accusing him of having become a slave of Jinnah

Saheb and a fifth columnist. But he was impervious to such outpourings. The *shlokas* of the Gita to which they listened every day were always with him to sustain him, and he was sure that his accusers did not know or understand them. It was because he was a sanatani Hindu that he claimed to be a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim. Some Muslim friends also felt that he had no right to read Arabic verses from the Koran, but such did not know that a true religion transcended language and scripture. He did not see any reason why he should not read the Kalma, why he should not praise Allah and why he should not acclaim Mahomed as his Prophet. He believed in all great prophets and saints of every religion. He would continue to ask God to give him the strength not to be angry with his accusers, but to be prepared even to die at their hands, without wishing them ill. He claimed that Hinduism was all inclusive and he was sure that, if he lived up to his convictions, he would have served not only Hinduism, but Islam also.

He told how he had reluctantly on his day of silence, which was an extra busy day for him, given a few minutes to a Hindu from Rawalpindi, who had come with a sorrowful tale of the happenings there. It was a tragedy that the Rawalpindi which he remembered where the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs vied with each other to give him and the Ali brothers hospitality, had today become unsafe for any non-Muslim. Hindus in the Punjab had anger burning within them, the Sikhs said that they were the disciples of Guru Govind Singh, who had taught them the use of the sword. But he would again and again plead with the Hindus and the Sikhs on no account to retaliate. He dared to say that even if the Hindus and the Sikhs died without retaliation at the hands of their Muslim brethren, they would save not only Hinduism and Sikhism, but they would also serve Islam and save the world.

For thirty years, he had preached the gospel of *satya* and ahimsa to them. For twenty years, he had done likewise in South Africa. He was sure that Indians in South Africa were the richer for following him there, and here too those who had followed truth and non-violence had lost nothing. It was his profession to teach the people to leave the ephemeral for the real. If he went to the Punjab, it could not be to preach revenge. That would be a disservice to both the Hindus and the Sikhs and also to the Muslims. The Bible rightly taught that vengeance belonged to God.

He could not understand a Pakistan where no non-Muslim could live in peace and security, nor a Hindustan where the Muslims were unsafe. He had been to Bihar and tried to wean the Hindus from their anger and to restore confidence in the Muslims. The ministers there were anxious to repair the terrible wrongs done to the poor Muslims by the Hindus. Rajendra Babu was the uncrowned king of Bihar. The Congress rule, which should exercise its influence equally on the Hindus and the Muslims, could not be truly national, if the Muslims could not feel safe under that rule. Therefore, he was glad that many Hindus in Bihar had publicly expressed their regret for the shameful deeds done by the Hindus and had assured him that such deeds would not be repeated. He would appeal to the Muslim leaders likewise to ask their fellow Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces not to try to wipe out the non-Muslims. Whatever provocative language the Hindus and the Sikhs used in the Punjab—he was told that they had done so—that was no reason whatsoever for the orgy of cruelty perpetrated by the mad Muslims in the areas where they were in the majority.

He went on to say that he was sorry to receive bad news from Noakhali, especially during the last two days. Satish Babu and his wife and his own immediate staff were all in East Bengal, and he would not shed a tear, if any of them were to perish in the flames there. But he hoped that the telegram he had sent to his friend, the Chief Minister of Bengal, would have the desired effect of stopping the loot and the arson which seemed to be rearing their heads once again in Noakhali.

On the following day, Gandhi began by saying that he had only one topic on which to address them these days and that was their sorrowful plight. He hoped that his daily words would reach their hearts and cleanse them of anger against each other.

A friend asked, whether he was not ashamed to have the police guarding his dwelling, while prayers were being held. Gandhi said laughingly that he was ashamed but he was a humble subject with no powers to interfere with the law. If they wanted to remove the police, they should go to their Sardar, who was the Home Member. He had also been asked wherefrom in Hinduism he had unearthed non-violence. He replied that ahimsa was in Hinduism, it was in Christianity, as well as in Islam. Whether they agreed with him or not, it was his bounden duty to preach what he believed to be the

truth, as he saw it. He was also sure that ahimsa had never made anyone a coward.

Gandhi regretted that such letters were written in English, and in very poor English at that. It was sad that many people had not yet learnt to love their own language.

At the prayer meeting on April 9, Gandhi first dwelt upon his favourite hymn which had been sung, and reminded the audience that the hymn was printed and distributed amongst them, when he conducted the prayers during his previous visit to Delhi. If all of them acted in accordance with the teaching of the hymn, India would be a land worth living in and worth dying for. The tenor of it required the human beings to fear no one and nothing but God, and, therefore, they would yield nothing to force, however great it might be and they would yield to reason everything that was just and honourable. Applying the rule to Pakistan, he could not help saying that the violence that was being practised, in order to seize Pakistan by force, was bound to defeat its purpose, if the Indians were worth their salt. He would make bold to say that the seizure of Pakistan by force was an empty dream.

On April 10 he referred to a letter he had received during the day from a well-informed and highly-placed friend. The burden of his letter was that he believed that the Viceroy had come out here definitely to transfer power to the Indian hands. The Viceroy, was a member of the Royal House; he had come at the bidding of the British Cabinet and the Cabinet was the people's voice.

The writer believed in their honesty of purpose, but doubted the bona fides of the British members of the services out here and of the representatives of the British commercial interests. They were, in his opinion, still of the old way of thinking. Their record in the past had not been worthy. They had done everything to exploit this land. Hitherto, it was they who had sown the seeds of dissension between the Hindus and the Muslims and staged riots at appropriate time. They had continued to non-co-operate with the autonomous Governments in the provinces. They were being untrue to the spirit of what the Viceroy had come to India to do.

If what the friend had written was true, it was a tragedy and the Britishers here, whether in the services or in the business, were not being loyal either to the people of India or to their own. He would appeal to them to help the Viceroy to make over a peaceful transfer

of power and leave India not as enemies, but as true friends, and thereby maintain the British name.

To his own people, Gandhi appealed not to lose faith and hope in themselves, not to fall into any traps that might be laid for them, but to lean on God and to rely on their own inner strength. There was no reason for anyone to sink to the level of a beast, even if someone else did.

On April 11, Gandhi broke the news that he would be leaving for Bihar on the following evening. He explained to them how he had gone to Noakhali at the call of the inner voice. He claimed that he had served the Hindus in Noakhali by restoring some confidence in them and he had served the Muslims too. In the same way he had gone to Bihar. He had said that he would do or die there. His work in both the places was unfinished. He could only be satisfied if in both the places, Hindus and Muslims, in however small a minority they might be, could live in absolute peace and security.

They might ask him why he was not visiting the Punjab, which had suffered and was suffering no less. He wished to say that no one could stop him from visiting the Punjab, when the call came. The leaders had advised him not to go there just yet. They were all aware that today there was British raj there, not Indian. The League raj was just as much Indian, as the Congress raj.

The moment the people began to think in terms of Hindu and Muslim raj, they fell into an error. That was a dangerous doctrine. In a true Pakistan, holy land, there ought to be no fighting. Everything must be done by appealing to reason and not through force. He was speaking to the Punjab from here. He was no stranger to that province or its people. The Congress fight against the British had succeeded because, in spite of some Congressmen falling into the error of violence, the movement had remained non-violent.

He appealed to the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab to resolve to be killed, but not kill. They should resist Pakistan being forced on them with all the incomparable strength of satyagraha.

He said, that he was not afraid to die in his mission, if that was to be his fate. As they had heard in the evening hymn, no doctor could make his patient live beyond the allotted span. If the Hindus and the Sikhs were non-violent, the world would then condemn the action of the Muslims in trying to get Pakistan by force. It would be a wonderful lesson for the whole world.

He said he was returning to Bihar, because his work in Delhi was over for the time being. He had told them he was a prisoner both of the Viceroy and Jawaharlal. His talks with the former were over for the time being and Jawaharlal was too big to restrain him from going where he thought his duty lay. He then added that he was a worshipper of the Gita, and the Gita said that it was best at all times to do one's duty in one's own field, no matter how big any work outside that field may seemingly appear.

He concluded his speech by saying how as a poor man he travelled always by third class in the railway. Many wanted him to fly, because people disturbed him at every railway station. He could sleep in the train if only they would let him. He needed the rest and he needed to conserve his energy, if he was to serve them. He hoped that his words would be appreciated by all those who loved him. Their love may not be unrestrained.

He said that he had to hang his head in shame when foreigners asked him about the communal strife in India. All he could say to them was that it was not everybody that had gone mad. The mad orgies were the work of a few and he prayed and believed that all would become one in God's good time.

He hoped that the people of Delhi would take their full share in bringing about that heart unity.

On April 12, Gandhi referred to the publication of a report in a responsible newspaper purporting to say that he was leaving because he had quarrelled with the Working Committee. The statement was completely wrong. All the members of the Working Committee who were in Delhi on that day (Saturday) had been with him for one hour a short time before. Their discussions were always carried on in the spirit of love, whatever differences of opinion there might be. Why should he, he exclaimed, ask the permission of the Viceroy and of Jawaharlal Nehru to leave Delhi, if he had quarrelled with either of them?

When the Sardar asked him when he was returning to Delhi, he had at once replied, "Whenever you send for me." It was, therefore, wholly wrong on the part of the newspapers to give out false news and unnecessarily agitate people's minds and deceive or mislead them. Unfortunately, the newspapers had become more important to the average man than the scriptures. He would fain advise them to give up reading the newspapers. They would lose nothing by so doing,

whereas real food for their minds and spirits lay in the scriptures and other good literature.

The press was called the Fourth Estate. It was definitely a power but to misuse that power was criminal. He was a journalist himself and he would appeal to fellow journalists to realize their responsibility and to carry on their work with no idea other than that of upholding the truth. If they wanted to put out such news, surely it was their duty to go to Jawaharlal Nehru or himself. That would have been honourable.

In bidding them farewell, he hoped that they would continue to pray even in his absence and thus grow in strength.

## *Gandhi-Jinnah Appeal*

1947

IN HIS prayer speech at Patna on April 14, 1947, Gandhi said that he had heard disquieting news from Noakhali. If it proved to be true, he might have to fast, since by going to Bihar while his work in Noakhali was still unfinished, he had earned the right of fasting against the misdeeds in Noakhali. That did not mean that fasting was a certainty. He, however, felt bound to hint at the possibility.

He referred to his talks with the Viceroy at Delhi and said that, both in the public and private conversations, the Viceroy declared that he was going to be the last Viceroy of India and that also only up to June 30, 1948.

He himself felt that the Viceroy was honest in his profession. The British were already preparing for the transfer of power. He felt that the Viceroy realized that the transfer of power must be peaceful, if Britain was to escape the charge that, during her reign of more than a century, she had brought up nothing but fight among ourselves. It was a sad sight that, while the freedom was almost within their grasp, they were fighting among themselves. All the important members of the Congress, whether in the Interim Government or outside it, were trying their best to grasp freedom and to establish peace in the country, freeing it from at least the major portion of the evils of the old order.

The following day he said that, while he was in Delhi, he received letters from Bihar, some couched in thoughtless language, some in language of praise, and a few expressing doubt, if he was ever returning to Bihar to finish his work. The last needed no reply. Praise was wholly unnecessary for one doing one's duty as he was doing his. He, however, singled out one letter which he thought was based on pure ignorance. That doubted his wisdom of leaving his work in Noakhali and coming to Bihar at the instance of Dr. Syed Mahmud and daring to accept his hospitality.

The critic forgot that Dr. Syed Mahmud was his friend and that he had known Dr. Mahmud's father-in-law, before he knew the late Brajkishore Prasad of revered memory, or Dr. Rajendra Prasad. In his opinion, Dr. Mahmud had rendered a service to the Hindus and the Muslims of Bihar by bringing him to Bihar. For, if Bihar remained sane in the midst of possible madness throughout India, she would raise India in the estimation of the world, and would leave to the world a singular example of sanity in the midst of surrounding insanity. This he had a right to expect by right of service and more so, because the Bihar Hindus, however illiterate they might be, were votaries of Rama, the incarnation of all the good in the world. Although evil seemed at times to rule the world, the eternal truth was that the world lived, so long as goodness resided even in one person. Evil was naught. If Bihar remained good in the midst of temptation, it was well with it, and well with the whole of India.

The insinuation that there was a sinister motive behind drawing him away from Noakhali, that the Noakhali Muslims might be free from his restraining influence, was too flimsy to bear examination. For, if he succeeded wholly in Bihar, then it was impossible for very shame that the Noakhali Muslims should go mad.

At the end, he announced that the heat was too great for him to stand the strain of motoring extensively and working the whole day. He found it necessary to have frequent intervals of rest, if he was to go through a fair amount of work. And he had ample to do in Patna. Incidentally, he mentioned that he would try each evening to cover important points of interest to the public.

On April 15, a communique was issued from Delhi releasing the joint appeal from Gandhi and Jinnah, denouncing "for all time the use of force to achieve political ends", and calling upon all communities to refrain from violence and disorder.

On April 16, Gandhi referred to a statement which he had signed at the suggestion of the Viceroy while he was in Delhi. The act had the consent of Nehru and other members of the Congress Working Committee. Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah had also signed it. The terms of the document were:

"We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India and greatest misery to innocent people, irrespective of who were the aggressors and who were the victims.

"We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends, and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder, but also to avoid both in speech and writing, any word which might be construed as an incitement to such acts."

So far as his signature was concerned, Gandhi remarked, it had no value for he had never believed in violence. But it was significant that Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah had signed it. If the spirit of the appeal was adhered to by the signatories—and there was no reason.why it should not be—they could hope that all the trouble and bloodshed would cease. It might be that they would now enable him to leave Bihar and do other work.

They might well ask why his signature was taken and not of the members of the Working Committee or of the Congress President. He could not go into the matter now. He confessed that he represented nobody but himself. Nevertheless, the signatures laid a heavy responsibility on both of them. He had not signed the appeal only on behalf of any one community. It meant assuming responsibility for all the communities. He claimed that all religions were equal. A similar claim could be advanced on the Qaid-e-Azam's behalf, since this appeal was issued not only to one community, but to all the communities. And there was a time when Jinnah Saheb had a high position in the Congress.

But the Viceroy should be congratulated on bringing about the unique document. No doubt, it would have been better, if such a document had been signed as between the Congress and the League without any outsider's intervention. He hoped, however, that there would now be co-operation between the two bodies.

At the next prayer gathering, Gandhi drew attention to the fact that for the sake of the Muslim friends who wished to join prayers—and the day had grown longer—the prayer time was advanced by fifteen minutes. He also warned those who were inclined to laugh at the selections from the Koran and the other scriptures against the practice. They ought to cultivate the same regard for other religions that they had for their own. Not to do so was to belittle one's own faith and expose it to attacks from without.

After the prayer, he referred to the visits he had from Muslim friends who complained to him that, in and about Bihar Sharif and Monghyr districts, things were not quite favourable to the return

of the refugees. If the information was correct, he was very sorry. The heat was so oppressive, that he had not the heart to undertake arduous travelling during the hot weather, but he would have no other recourse, if the Hindus in those places had not the spirit of repentance and do not resume their friendliness towards their Muslim neighbours, no matter how few they were. It was suggested to him that arms should be issued to the Muslims, who were in fear of their Hindu neighbours. Those who made such suggestions did not know him. He would not issue any license to the Muslims or the Hindus for the purpose of self-defence. It was a sign of barbarity. He would even take away the arms from those who had possessed the arms already. Their arms were a living faith in God and a stout heart born of that faith.

On April 18, Gandhi referred to the complaint he had received about the punitive tax that was levied. He felt that the state had no other alternative, if the people would not give up the criminals. Nor could the state carry out the mass arrests, where hundreds and thousands were involved in shameful crimes. The punitive tax was then the only remedy. The only way by which the people could render the punitive tax unnecessary was to repent and undo the wrong done by voluntary labour and contributions. People should also approach the injured Muslims and request them to go back to their homes. They should assure them that they would regard them as their dear ones.

On April 19, Gandhi spoke about the two letters he had received, one from the Punjab from a lady known to him and the other from a Bihari who had chosen not to give his address, and probably had given an assumed name. Both were friendly letters but written in anger. They had lost faith in non-violence and practically advised his retirement and thus save his good name which he had earned by service. These friends did not know the virtue of non-violence. His dream was not that some persons, the soldiers and the police, should save their honour, but every man and every woman should be the custodian of his or her own honour. This was possible only under the rule of ahimsa and no other. He was never tired of repeating that the highest form of bravery was to be expressed through non-violence. The people of Bihar had before them the example of the non-violence of the indigo-growing peasants of Champaran, who were able to bring to an end a century-old wrong.

Gandhi then announced that, during the next four or five days, he would be having meetings of the All-India Spinners' Association and the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. He was not, therefore, going to see local people in connection with the Bihar disturbances.

On April 20, he told the prayer audience that the Charkha Sangh had acceded to the proposal of Laxmi Babu and his colleagues that they should be wholly independent of the material support of the Charkha Sangh, while keeping its purely moral authority. He said that if he were the Prime Minister of Bihar and he had to select the members of his government, the latter would stop all the new mills and would expect those already established in Bihar to sell all their manufactures at controlled rates outside India, and thus gain for Bihar the estimation of the world for generosity. For, there was shortage of cloth everywhere in the world. He would prevent with the consent of people the sale of mill cloth in Bihar. Fortunately or unfortunately for Bihar, he was not its Prime Minister. Nevertheless, such was the ambition of the Charkha Sangh in acceding to Laxmi Babu's proposal. Expectation was that Laxmi Babu and his colleagues by reason of their independence of the Charkha Sangh could be better able to push forth the khadi programme and make it so popular, that Bihar would become wholly independent of mill cloth. He held that this was quite possible, if the people of Bihar gave their whole-hearted co-operation. The villages of Bihar would hum with the soothing music of the charkha and the loom. They would bring vitality to the villages of Bihar. Khadi would cease to be an article of commerce. The cities like Patna then would also be manufacturing their own khadi. The school children and college students would gladly and religiously set apart a certain portion of their time every day for this very necessary constructive work. The city women would equally be expected to do no less. With diligence and will, they would become self-supporting in the matter of khadi. Then and then only, would khadi find its natural place in the economy of the nation. The drudgery of the mill would give place to the joy of creation in their homes and schools.

Gandhi drew attention to the fact that whereas the mills needed to import machinery and even skill, to an extent, from outside, all the parts required for the charkha and the loom and the required skill were to be found in their villages. He wished that the new experiment would find favour with the people of Bihar.

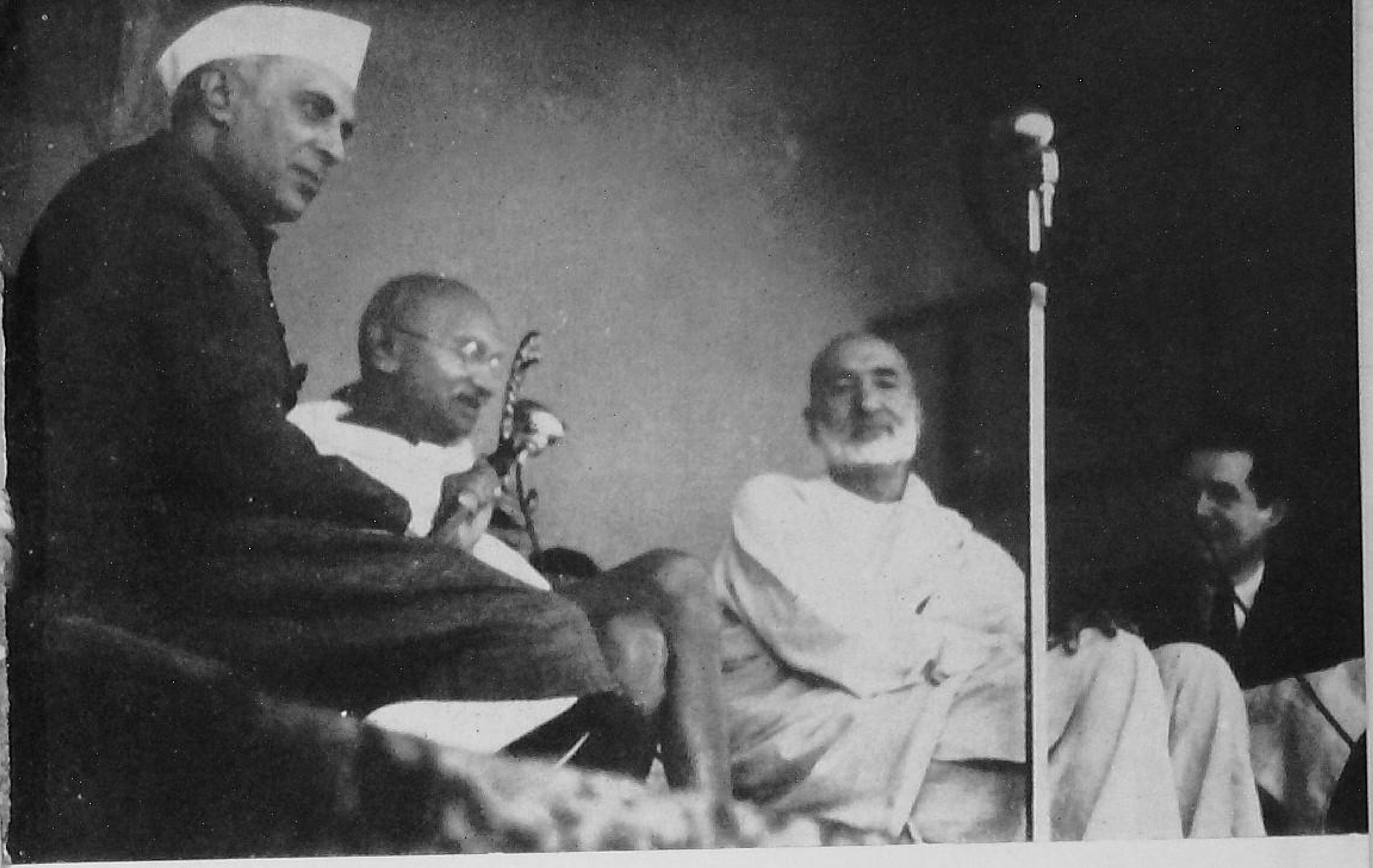
On April 21, his written speech was read out at the meeting:

"This evening too, I must speak to you about khadi. The secret lies in hand-spun yarn. From the days of yore, spinning had been woman's speciality. Poor soul, she was the slave, and man the master who was to pay her the wage that was her due. During the Middle Ages, she had to spin perforce for a mere pittance.

"Except for Assam, weaving was considered man's occupation. Hence, there is life left in hand-weaving. But there is no room for doubt that hand-weaving is doomed to extinction, if hand-spinning is not revived in all the glory that by right belongs to it. Thus, if men and women will not take to hand-spinning as a sacred duty, that is, the same person will not do carding, slivering and spinning, there is little hope for khadi. I am not thinking of khadi wear as a fashion. Khadi of my conception is that hand-spun which takes the place entirely in India of mill cloth. It is beyond my power to give an adequate description of the power that this khadi would give to the whole of India.

"Such khadi must remain a dream, if the men of India in their millions will not spin, if only by way of penance, for the sin they have committed against the women, and the women will not do so as a sacred duty. That yarn which may have to be spun for wages will have to bear the same rate per hour that is paid to men for labour. There can be no inequality in wages between the sexes. The lordship of men over women must cease. The days of this lordship are over. That we do not make this admission is a different thing. It cannot arrest the march of events. God has made of man and woman one complete whole. In the scheme of nature, both of them are equal. It has been the object of khadi to verify this maxim of sex equality. The All India Spinners' Association has not yet succeeded, but the effort is in that direction. The time is coming when a mill-owner's wife will become a true devotee of khadi. Then khadi will be supreme to the exclusion of mill cloth in India. May you, the women of Bihar, make the mighty effort to bring to an early fruition that happy day."

The next day in the prayer speech, Gandhi dealt with the work of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. He reminded the audience that the Congress had issued a charter to the Talimi Sangh and, therefore, one would expect that, in matters of education, the Congress would fall back upon its experts and be guided by them.

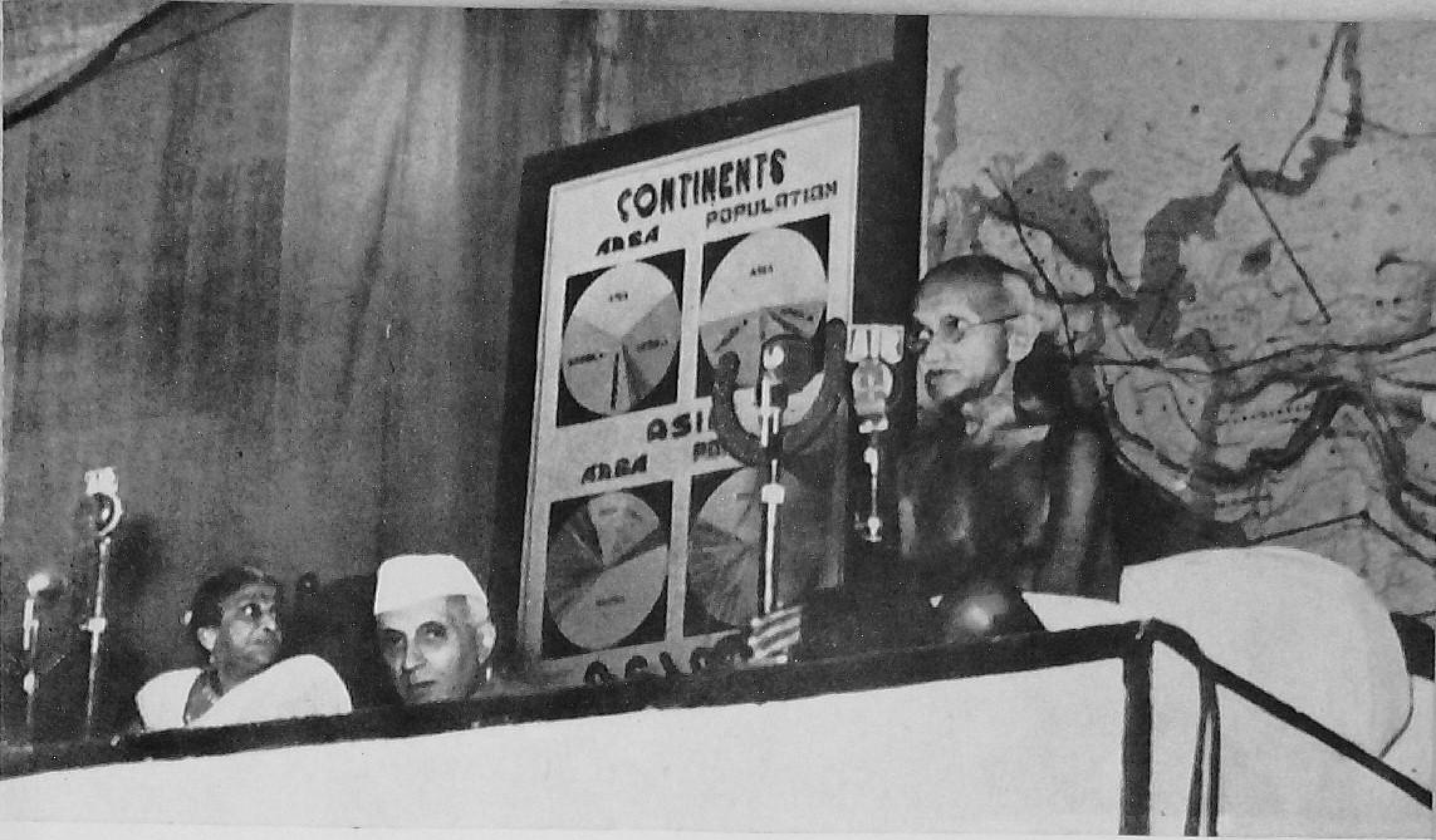


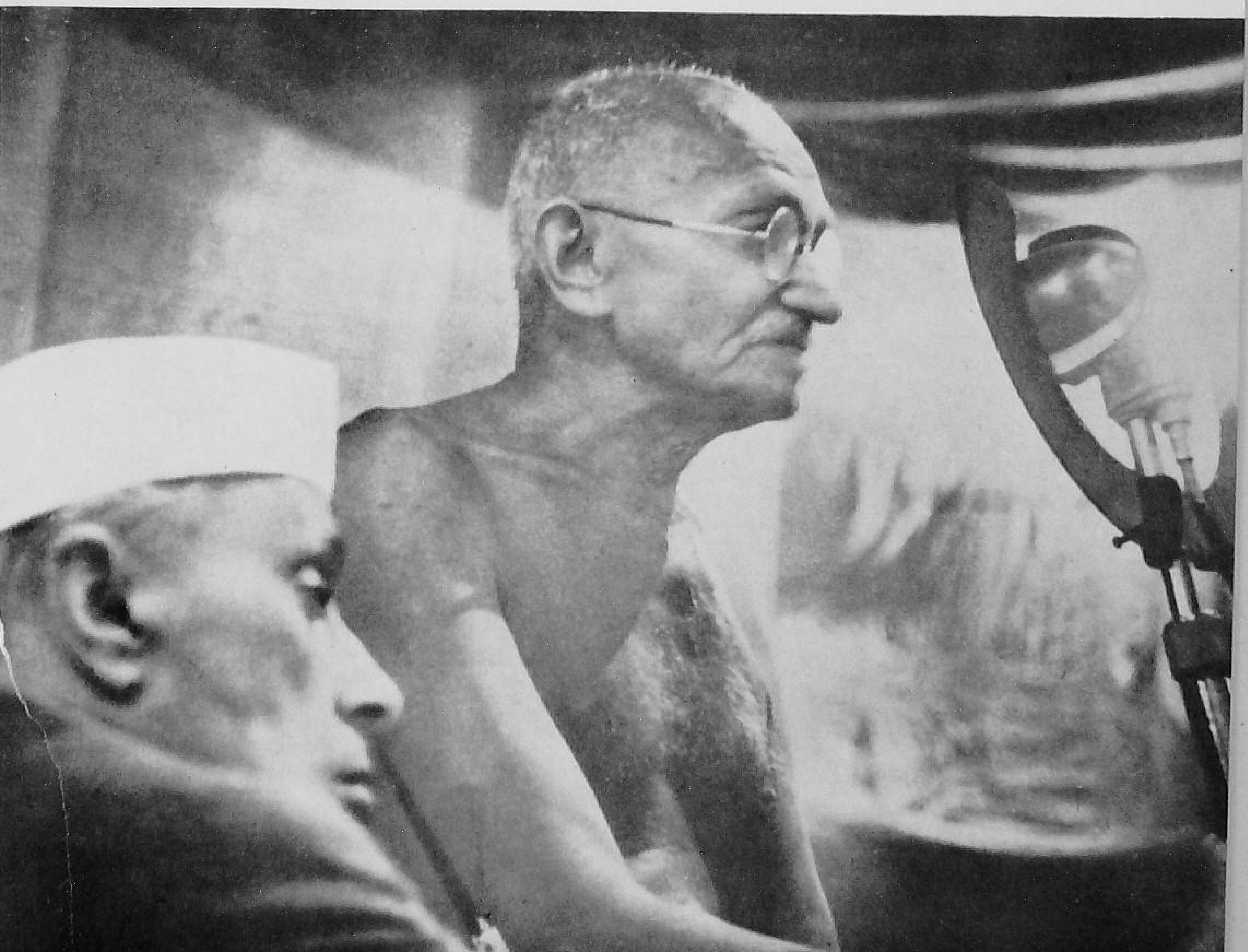
*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi replying to the questions at the Inter-Asian Relations Conference in Delhi, April 1, 1947

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

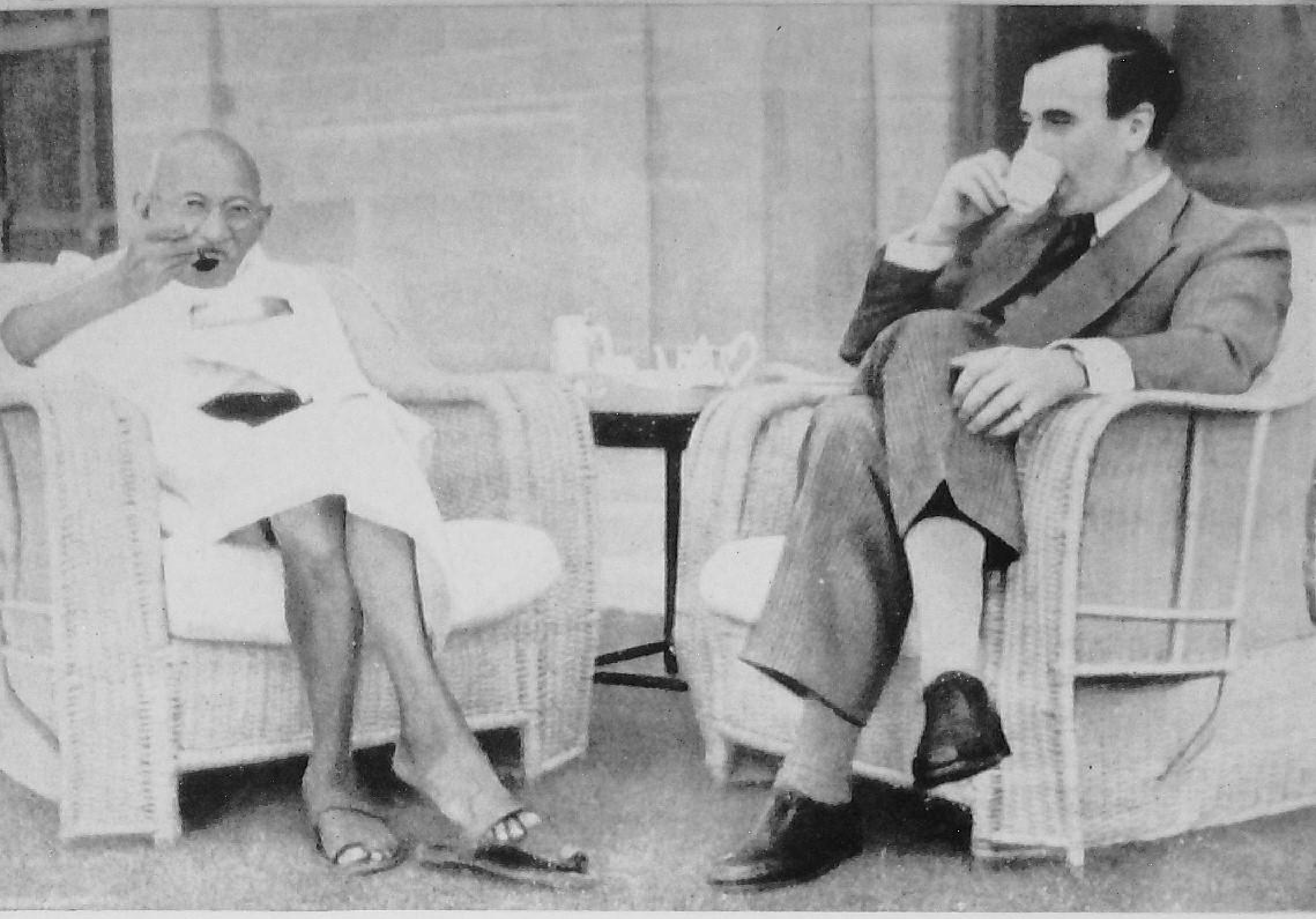
Dr. Sjahriar greeting Gandhi at the Asian Conference in Delhi, April 1947



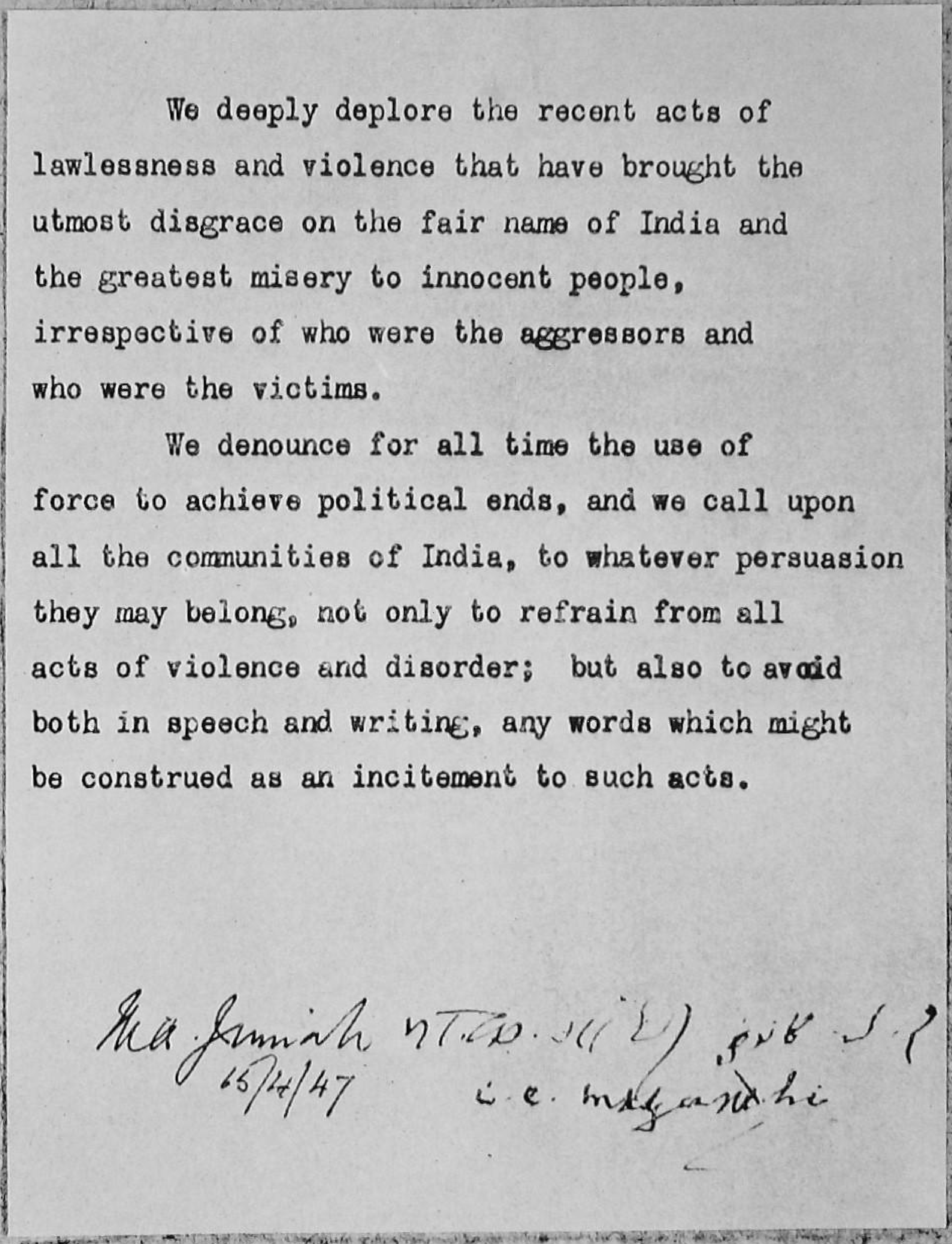
*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi addressing the delegates of the Inter-Asian Relations Conference in Delhi, April 2, 1947



*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi having his evening meals during the long conference with Lord Mountbatten, April 1947



We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India and the greatest misery to innocent people, irrespective of who were the aggressors and who were the victims.

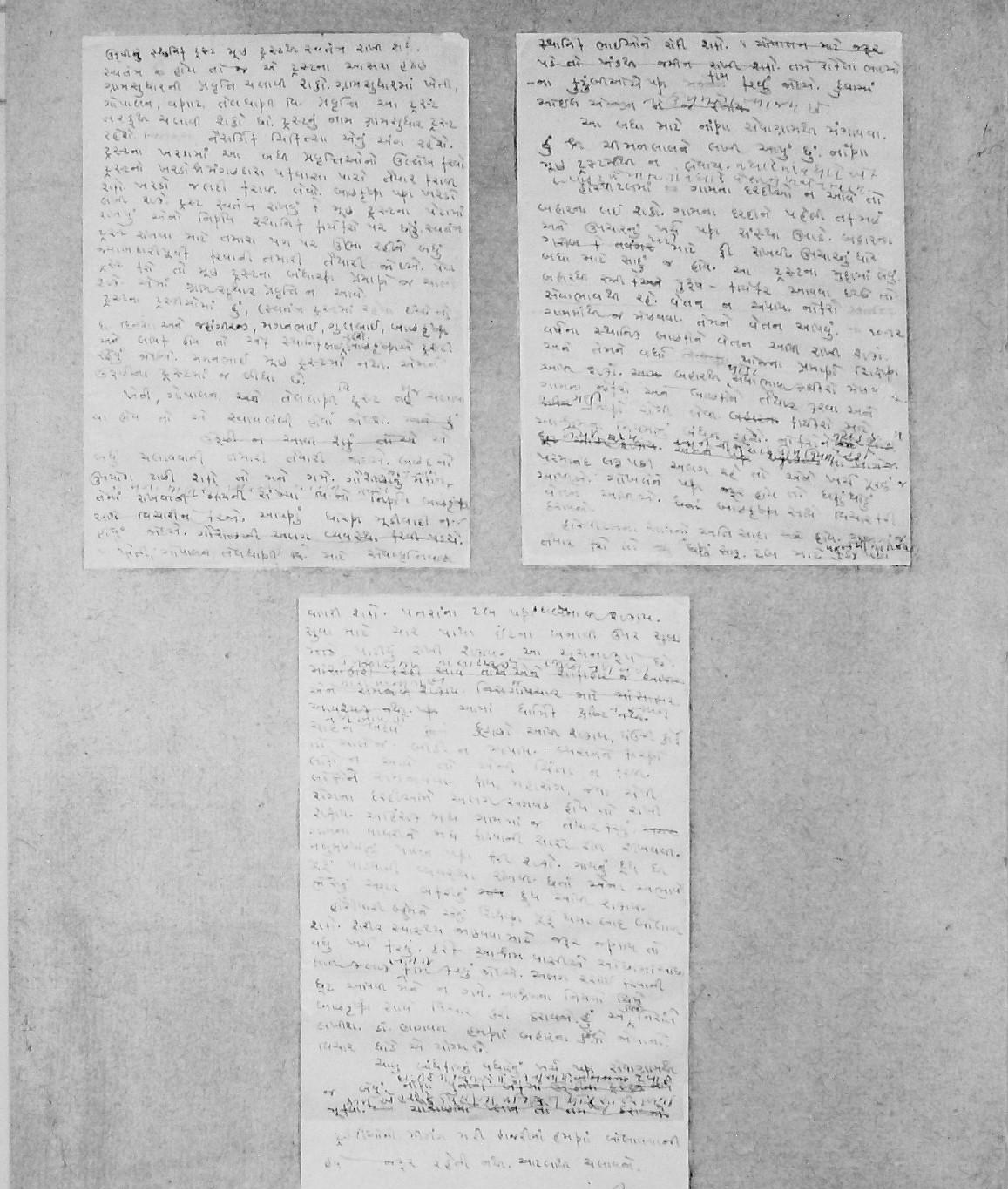
We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends, and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder; but also to avoid both in speech and writing, any words which might be construed as an incitement to such acts.

M.A. Jinnah
15/4/47

M. K. Gandhi

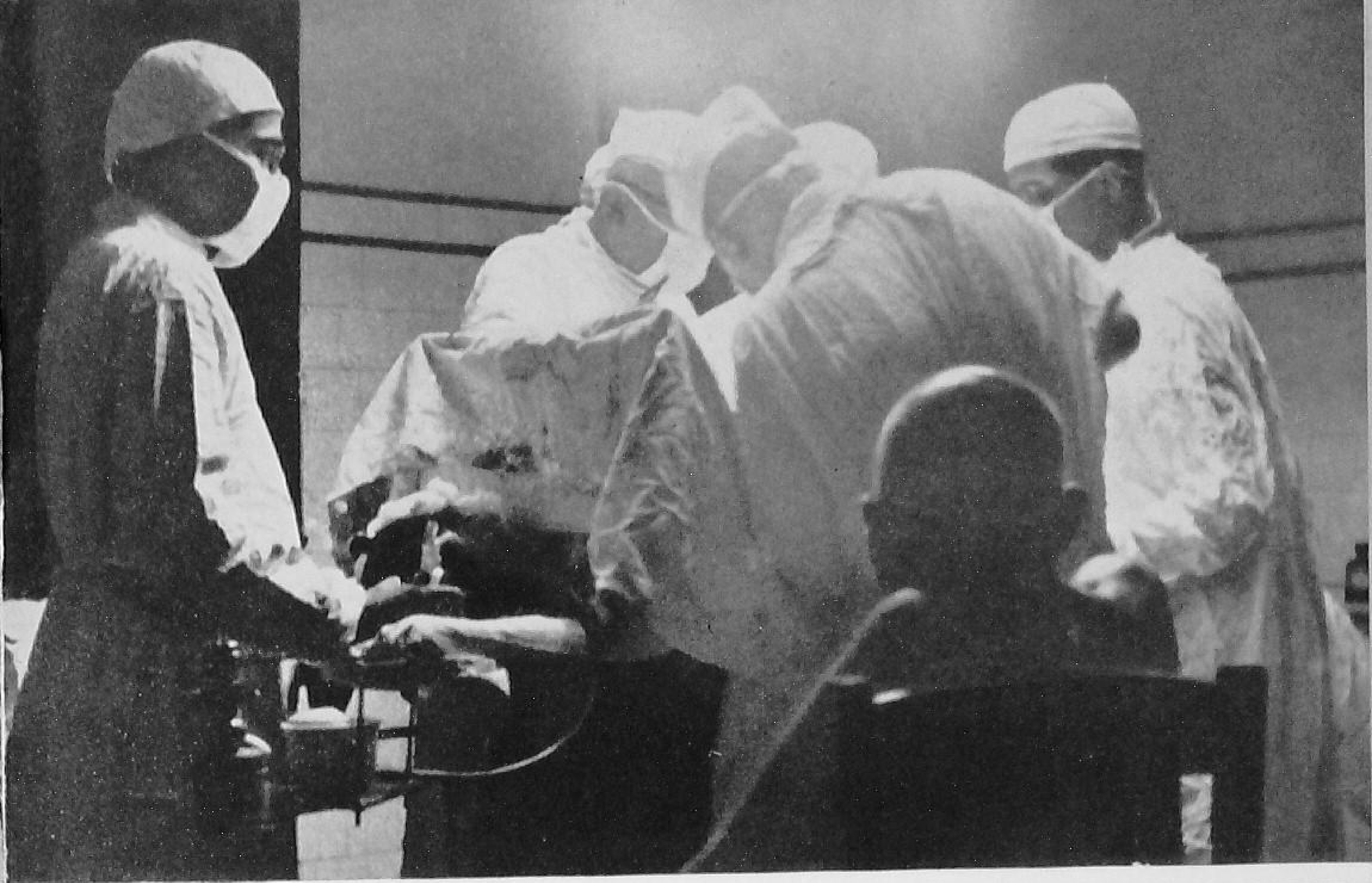
From Sumati Morarjee Collection

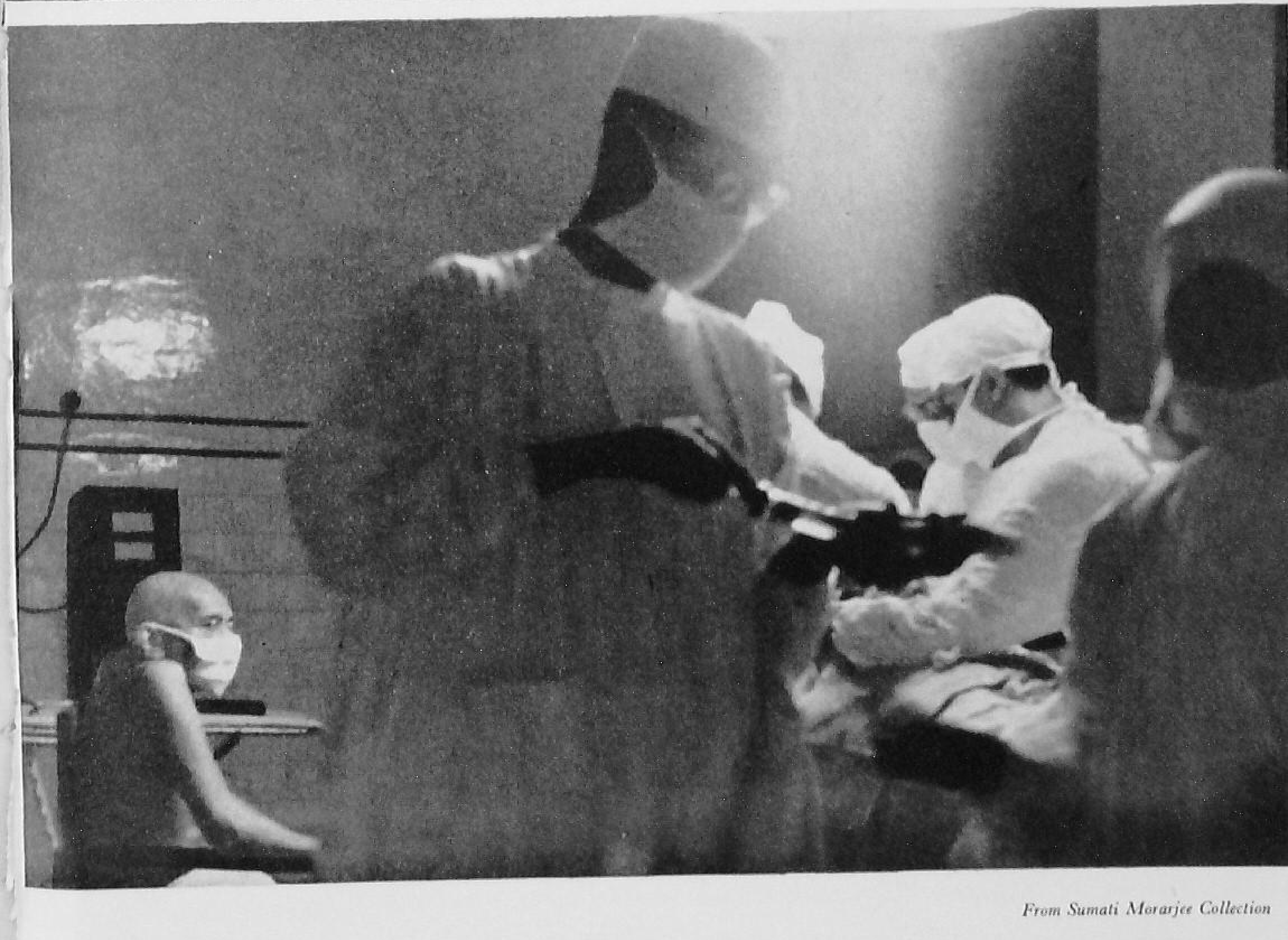
The joint peace appeal signed by Jinnah in English and by Gandhi in Devanagari, Urdu and English, dated Delhi, April 1947



*Courtesy : All-India Nature Cure Trust, Uruli*

Instructions to the nature cure workers at Uruli, drafted by Gandhi on the train to Patna, April 13, 1947





*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi watching an operation for appendicitis on Manu Gandhi during the night of May 15, 1947, Patna

*From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

Gandhi in Noakhali hat with J. B. Kripalani, the Congress President, Delhi, May 1947

Expressing himself strongly in favour of the use of Hindustani by Indians as against English, he said that he had deliberately signed his name in the joint appeal in Hindi and Urdu.

The two-day session of Hindustani Talimi Sangh which ended on April 23 was marked by frank discussion. At the very outset, while discussing the budget, Gandhi warned the Talimi Sangh members against any tendency to lean on the governments. "They would be prepared to give us, as much perhaps as we ask for. But if we begin to depend on them, it will mean the end of Nayee Talim." The budget presented was for three years. They must become entirely self-supporting at the end of that period. They should, therefore, make the budget estimate accordingly. And if at the end of the period they were not able to succeed, they would have to declare their bankruptcy before the country. The failure became a stepping-stone to success, when it was duly appraised.

Dealing with the demand of Mr. Avinashalingam, the Education Minister of Madras, that the Talimi Sangh should run a training school in Madras, the expenses of which would be borne by the Government, Gandhi warned them against the undertakings beyond their strength. Otherwise, they would dissipate their own energy and would put the Madras Government also in a fix. Today, with the assumption of power, crores of rupees had come into the hands of the Congress Governments. It was up to the Talimi Sangh to weigh the pros and cons and to run the institution, if they had teachers enough for the work and were sure of the success. It was well to know one's limitations.

"Our system of basic education," continued Gandhi, "leads to the development of the mind, body and soul. The ordinary system of education cared only for the mind. Nayee Talim was not confined to teaching a little spinning and a little sweeping. However indispensable these were, they were valueless, unless they promoted the harmonious development referred to." He assured the Talimi Sangh, "Today, I am engaged in other work. But Nayee Talim has never been out of my mind."

Next he turned to the place of khadi in Nayee Talim. It was in South Africa, in 1909, that khadi occupied an important place in his mind. He would not insist, however, on centering the Nayee Talim round khadi, if he knew a better all-round village industry. He felt that if all spun for one hour daily, India would be able to produce

all her cloth requirements. If, however, it required six hours a day, he had no room for khadi. For, people had to do other things also. They had to produce their food. Some intellectual work had also to be done. There was no room for slave driving in Nayee Talim. One hour spent in spinning should be an hour of self-development for the spinner. He added:

"When Saiyidain Saheb said that at least in post-basic stage the processes in the mills would have to be taught. I could not accept it. Not only was hand-spinning sound as a medium of education during the basic period, it did not cease to be so during the post-basic stage. What is more, millions of students could not be exempt from the necessary occupation. Yesterday, Dev Prakash showed me what he had written on the *takli* and the broom. If all that he has written is true, a lot of knowledge is gained in the learning of the two processes. It could not be finished during the basic period. The trouble is that we have not evolved the science of these essential crafts, consistently with the good of all. The basis of mill-spinning and weaving are the *takli* and the handloom. The West made mills, because it had to exploit us. We do not want to exploit anyone. We do not, therefore, need mills, but we must know the science of the *takli* and the loom. If India were to copy Europe in these, it will mean destruction for India and the world."

On Dr. Zakir Husain pointing out the difficulty of educationists to think in these terms, when the boys who came out of the schools looked to the mills for employment, Gandhi said:

"Boys that come out of the school of my conception will not look to mills for employment. As a matter of fact, mill cloth should not sell side by side with khadi. Our mills may sell their manufactures outside India. In England, you do not get the cloth manufactured in Lancashire. The whole of it is exported. Our mills may not be able to sell in foreign markets too for long.

"I can, however, realize your difficulty in view of the fact that the whole atmosphere around is surcharged with the idea of mills. Even our own ministers talk only of the mills. The way for us is to die in living up to our faith. If we believe in the truth of khadi, we must live it, spread it and convince the ministers that we are doing the right thing in terms of national good.

"The Congress created the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, but never took any interest in it. Similarly, the Charkha Sangh is the progeny

of the Congress, but it never made it its own. Who cares for these institutions today? When the Congressmen had only a little money and a little experience, they paid some attention to constructive work. Today, however, the entire Government has come into our hands. They have not yet digested the power it has brought. They will take time to do so."

Dr. Zakir Husain asked Gandhi to help co-ordinate the activities of the Government and the Talimi Sangh, or let the sangh go into the wilderness. Gandhi confessed that he no longer commanded the same influence, as he used to do. "I do not blame the Government for apathy. They have inherited a machinery which they have to work. If I had been a minister, perhaps, I too would have acted similarly. Still, I am talking things over with Jawaharlal and others. One task of the educationists is to explain things."

Dr. Zakir Husain stated: "I believe that the fault lay in the fact that the Congress had never explained its educational policy to its ministers. I met Maulana Azad before coming here. He expressed sympathy and said that he would like to meet the Talimi Sangh. The sangh has now decided to see him."

Gandhi said in reply: "The Government should have invited you at the very outset. Mr. Sargent should work under the guidance of Talimi Sangh. I had suggested to the Government that they should send you an invitation."

With regard to religious education Dr. Zakir Husain thought that facilities should be provided for and time apportioned for education in schools, so as to enable those who understood religion to come and teach. More than that the Government should not undertake, if they wanted to avoid the appearance of undue interference.

Gandhi said in reply: "You should talk it over with the Maulana Saheb. I do not agree that the Government should provide religious education. If there are some people who want to give religious education of the wrong type, you cannot prevent it. And if you try to do so, the result can only be bad. Those who want to give religious education may do so on their own, so long as it is not subversive of law and order or morals. The Government can only teach ethics based on the main principles common to all religions and agreed to by all parties. In fact, ours is a secular state."

Regarding the certificates to be granted to those passing out of the basic stage, Gandhi said that the standard should have a short

and precise name and the certificate should exactly state in clear Hindustani the qualifications of the candidate without the slightest exaggeration. "To give a thing a high-sounding name, when its real worth does not correspond to it, reflects no credit on the giver."

Mr. Avinashalingam thought that the co-education policy of the Talimi Sangh was not suitable to Madras. He had no objection to co-education among the children and among the grown-ups, when they knew their own minds. But he was not in favour of co-education at the impressionable age of fifteen or sixteen, when most of the girls came to training schools. Gandhi, however, disagreed: "If you keep co-education in your schools, but not in the training-schools, the children will think that there is something wrong somewhere. I should allow my children to run the risk. We shall have to rid ourselves of this sex mentality. We should not seek for examples from the West. Even in training-schools, if teachers are intelligent, pure, and filled with the spirit of Nayee Talim, there is no danger. Supposing if some accidents happen, we should not be frightened by them. They would take place anywhere. Though I speak boldly, I am not unaware of the attendant risks. But you, as a responsible minister, should think for yourself and act accordingly."

Jajuji, on the question of self-support, said that the craft of spinning and weaving was less paying than some other occupations, as for example, carpentry. It was doubtful whether students passing out of the basic stage could be self-supporting, even after seven years of training. They could earn six or eight annas a day at the Charkha Sangh rate. Gandhi said:

"We should not think in terms of money. Khadi is the centre of our activities, because we all need cloth. We have the question of clothing the seven lakhs of villages. Today, we get our yarn woven by paying high rates to the weavers. It was wrong of me not to insist on everybody learning weaving, as I did in the case of spinning. It must, however, be seen that it does not require more time than can be spared for it. If it occupies the whole of the time at our disposal, we shall have to think anew.

"The teacher of Nayee Talim will be a craftsman educationist, not merely one for the sake of his pay. Pay or salary is a bad word. He is a workman worthy of his hire. His wife and children too will be workers. Only thus will true co-operation be born. Only thus can Nayee Talim spread in every village in India.

"Some people ask me why agriculture could not be a basic craft. The answer is that it has not the educational potentialities of spinning. It cannot, for example, develop deftness as spinning can. The function of Nayee Talim is not merely to teach an occupation, but through it to develop the whole man.

"But though I do not begin with agriculture, it is bound to come in ultimately. For, the field of the new education is comprehensive. The pupils and teachers of the schools of my conception together will have to make provision for all they need. A teacher of Nayee Talim will have to be a first-class craftsman. All the children of the village will be themselves drawn to the school. In this way, would education automatically become free and universal."

Having heard that some Hindus were whispering to one another that Muslims being beef-eaters were the natural enemies of Hinduism and were, therefore, fit to be destroyed, Gandhi spoke on cow protection at the prayer meeting on April 25. He said that nearly forty years ago, he wrote about it in *Hind Swaraj* in South Africa. He was from his childhood a devotee of the cow. He believed the cow to be the natural mother of prosperity. But he had expressed the opinion in *Hind Swaraj* that the cow protection societies were destroyers of the cow and not her protectors. To this view, he adhered even today. True devotion to the cow required broad-mindedness and an accurate knowledge of the art and the science concerning the protection of the cow. In no country on the earth were the cow and her progeny so ill-treated as in India which, strangely enough, was the only country, where the cow was venerated. Their veneration, however, consisted of mere words and deadly quarrel with the Muslims over killing of cows. The very Hindus, who quarrelled with the Muslims, because they slaughtered the cow for the beef she gave, were not ashamed to accept the mastery of the English, who were known to be the beef-eaters in a sense in which the Muslims never were. He had no quarrel with the Englishmen because they ate beef, and as such, he had none with Muslims either. He was concerned with showing the great inconsistency of the Hindus, who for the sake of money gladly served their English masters and quarrelled with the Muslims. Then they forgot that there were Hindus who gladly partook of beef. He had known orthodox Vaishnavas who ate beef extract, when it was prescribed by their doctors. He reminded the people of the fact that, during the Khilafat days, thousands of cows

were saved from the Muslim knife. The late Maulana Bari used to say that if the Hindus helped the Muslims to save the Khilafat, the Muslims were bound to save the cow for the sake of the Hindus. From every point of view, therefore, he held that it was insensate on the part of the Hindus to be angry with their Muslim brethren because they ate beef and slaughtered cows. He quoted numerous instances to show the utterly inconsistent behaviour of the Hindus in this matter. He asked the Hindus to put their own house in order before it tottered to its ruin.

"I shall have to go to Delhi again on the 30th," he announced at the prayer gathering on April 28. "There is a call from Pandit Nehru. Kripalaniji has also sent a telegram from Rajputana that I should be in Delhi by May 1, as the Congress Working Committee meets on that day. It pains me to leave you at this stage. I do not relish the idea of leaving Bihar, unless the Muslims have completely shed their fear and both the communities allow me to leave with a clear conscience. I felt the same, when I left Noakhali. For, both these places I have the same motto before me, 'Do or Die'. My non-violence bids me dedicate myself to the service of the minorities. It would be like a new birth and give me an additional strength, if the Hindus and Muslims of both these places began to live at peace with each other and shed their animosity. God knows what will come out of this travail. Man can only try and perish in the attempt. God is all in all. We are only zeros. The same mission takes me to Delhi. I hope to return within a short time and resume duty.

"You may be astonished to learn that I continue to receive letters charging me that I have compromised the interests of the Hindus by acting as a friend of the Muslims. How can I convince the people by mere words, if the last sixty years of my public life have failed to demonstrate that by trying to befriend the Muslims, I have only proved myself a true Hindu, and have rightly served the Hindus and Hinduism? The essence of a true religious teaching is that one should serve and befriend all. I learnt this in my mother's lap. You may refuse to call me a Hindu. I know no defence except to quote a line from Iqbal's famous song: 'Majhab nahin sikhata apasmen ber rakhna', meaning 'religion does not teach us to bear ill will towards one another.' It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one, who regards himself as your enemy, is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business."

Speaking after the prayer on May 1, in Delhi, Gandhi referred to the violence that was taking place in the Frontier Province, in the Punjab and in other places. The audience might well ask, he said, why in spite of the joint appeal by the Qaid-e-Azam and himself for peace in the country and the declaration in the appeal that use of force should be eschewed for all time for gaining political ends, the appeal seemed to have been entirely defeated in practice.

In his opinion, the honour, both of the Viceroy, who was instrumental in bringing about the joint appeal, and of the Qaid-e-Azam was involved in the failure of the appeal. He held that it was not open to Jinnah Saheb to plead that his followers did not listen to his appeal. That would be cutting the whole ground from under his feet, because he was the undisputed President of All-India Muslim League which claimed to represent the vast bulk of Muslim population of India. Where was the authority of the Muslim League, if the Muslims resorted to violence for gaining the political aim which was summed up in the word Pakistan? Was the British Government to yield to the force of arms, rather than the force of reason?

He had expressed his doubts as to the wisdom of issuing the joint appeal, unless it was certain that it meant for both the signatories all that the words thereof conveyed.

On May 2, Mr. Thatte of the anti-Pakistan Front, was arrested outside the Valmiki temple, just before Gandhi came out for prayer. Earlier in the day, Mr. Thatte had sent a letter to Gandhi informing him of his intention to object to the recitation of the verses from the Koran at the prayer meeting.

The prayer meeting commenced as usual. When the verses from the Koran were being recited, a member of the audience objected to the recitation. He was arrested on the spot but Gandhi immediately stopped the prayer, and requested the policeman who had arrested the objector, to set him free.

He would be ashamed to pray, he said, where a person had been arrested for doing what he had done. He deplored such narrow-mindedness on the part of the people. Mere shouting of the slogans would not carry Hinduism anywhere. He was at a loss to understand why some Hindus objected to his reading the verses from the Koran during prayer. If at places, the Muslims had not behaved as they should, then it did not mean that the Hindus should retaliate by opposing the reading of the Koran.

The verse from the Koran that was being recited was a mighty prayer in praise of God. How did it harm the Hindu religion, if the prayer was recited in the Arabic language? He who said so, knew neither his religion, nor his duty. That prayer could also be recited in a temple.

He had been told by a friend that a prayer with the same meaning was also found in the Yajurveda. Those who had studied Hindu scriptures knew that among the one hundred and eight Upanishads there was one called the *Allopanishad.* Did not the man who wrote it know his religion? It was said that Guru Nanak himself went to Arabia in search of truth during his religious wanderings.

No religion in the world, he continued, could live without self-suffering. A faith gained in strength, only when people were willing to lay down their lives for it. The tree of life had to be watered with the blood of the martyrs, who laid down their lives without killing their opponents, or intending any harm to them. That was the root of Hinduism and of all other religions.

The scene that they witnessed was a symptom of the disease that had got hold of India. Intolerance, impatience and retaliation were now in the air. They were thinking even of universal conscription. God forbid that India should ever become a military nation, which would be a menace to the peace of the world, and yet if things went on as they were doing, what hope was there for India and, therefore, for the world? Was Pakistan to be seized by terrorism, such as they seemed to be witnessing in the Frontier Province, in the Punjab, in Sind and elsewhere?

People had suggested that everything would be all right and that the non-Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces would be put on absolute equality with the Muslims, if not specially favoured as against them. He suggested that it was an impossible dream. If the Muslims were taught otherwise while Pakistan was not established, they could not be expected to behave better after Pakistan had become a settled fact. It was up to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah and his lieutenants to inspire trust in the minds of minorities in the provinces or in parts, which were designed for Pakistan. Then there would no longer be fear of Pakistan-cum-partition.

Addressing a prayer meeting on May 3, Gandhi again reminded the audience of the woeful state of India today. All eyes were turned on her, in particular those of Asia and Africa. He had sensed that

at the Asian Conference. Japan had failed to give the right lead by following the path of imperialism and where was she today? India had won a moral victory over Great Britain, because she fought non-violently and that was why the Asian countries hoped for the proper guidance from India. It was the duty of every Indian not to belie these hopes.

If Asia and Africa had the right lead given to them by India, it would change the face of the whole world. Just as water became muddy on the surface, when the flood, here in the shape of liberty, came, but it flowed clear and peaceful after the flood, so he hoped that the present communal strife would cease and all the scum would fade away.

He then bitterly complained of the attempted disclosures in a leading newspaper of Delhi, purporting to disclose the decisions of the Viceroy and the decisions of the Congress Working Committee. He declared that to act in such a manner was to lower the standards of journalism. Having been himself a journalist of many years' standing, he could speak with authority on what the traditions of good journalism should be. Whatever was in the Viceroy's heart was his own business to disclose. Whatever decisions were taken by the Congress Working Committee were for its president or its secretary to give to the press. It was hitting below the belt for the newspapers to take such titbits as they picked up from here, there and everywhere, and dish them up for the purpose of creating sensation. That misled the public and harmed the cause. It was wrong to follow the bad example of some foreign newspapers. The Indian journalists should not imitate the bad manners for the sake of increasing sale or getting notoriety for scoops.

On May 4, Gandhi asked before the prayer began as to whether there were any objectors on the prayer ground. A solitary voice said "Yes". Gandhi was visibly hurt that the folly of one person should deprive thousands of persons from enjoying the sweets of community prayer. But, as he reiterated, it was against the spirit of ahimsa to overawe even one person into submission. He, therefore, asked the audience to close their eyes and to join him in silent prayer for two minutes. He asked them during this silence to enshrine the name of God—God, who was infinite, immeasurable and unknowable, had millions of names—in their hearts and bear no anger against the misguided youth who had stopped the prayer again that day.

He told the gathering that he had had ninety minutes' interview with the Viceroy during the day, in which the latter had complained against misleading reports and headlines in the newspapers. The Viceroy had said that he had come to India to transfer power in a peaceful manner to the Indian hands. By June 30, 1948, all signs of British rule were to vanish from here. It was his earnest desire that India should be united and all should live in harmony with each other, no matter to what community they belonged. He wanted the Indians to forget the past and to believe in the honest desire of the British to bring about, if possible, agreement between Hindus and Muslims before leaving. It would not redound to the credit, either of Britain or of India, the Viceroy had said, if the communal strife continued. The Viceroy was a famous naval commander and while, as such, he did not believe in non-violence, he repeatedly assured him that he believed in God and he always tried to act according to his conscience. He, therefore, pleaded with everyone that they should not place the obstacles in the Viceroy's way. If the strife continued in spite of his best endeavour during the period of the liquidation of British power, the Viceroy would not hesitate, however reluctant he might be, to have recourse to the use of military. Though the Interim Government of India was responsible for the preservation of law and order, he considered himself no less responsible in the ultimate end for the maintenance of peace, so long as British soldiers were on the Indian soil. He said that the Viceroy had spoken very courteously and earnestly and felt that his difficult task would be lightened, if all communities and parties recognized his honesty and co-operated in the pursuit of the common purpose.

On May 5, Gandhi answered questions put to him by Mr. Doon Campbell, Reuter's special correspondent at New Delhi.

Question: "Is the communal division of India inevitable? Will such division solve the communal problem?"

Gandhi: "Personally, I have always said 'No', and I say 'No', even now, to both these questions."

Question: "Do you subscribe to the opinion that Britain will be morally obliged to stay on in India, if outstanding Hindu-Muslim differences have not been resolved by June, 1948?"

Gandhi: "This is a question that has never been put to me before. It would be a good thing, if the British were to go today—thirteen months means mischief to India. I do not question the nobility of

the British declaration, I do not question the sincerity of the Viceroy, but facts are facts. Neither the British Cabinet nor the Viceroy, however outstanding he may be, can alter facts. And the facts are that India has been trained to look to the British power for everything. Now, it is not possible for India to take her mind off that state all of a sudden. I have never appreciated the argument that the British want so many months to get ready to leave. During that time, all parties will look to the British Cabinet and the Viceroy. We have not defeated the British by the force of arms. It has been a victory for India by moral force. Assuming, of course, that every word of what has been said is meant to be carried out, then the British decision will go down in history as the noblest act of Great Britain. That being so, the thirteen months' stay of British power and British arms is really a hindrance rather than a help, because everybody looks for help to the great military machine that they have brought into being. That happened in Bengal, in Bihar, in the Punjab, and in the North-West Frontier Province. The Hindus and the Muslims said in turn, 'Let us have the British troops.' This is a humiliating spectacle. I have often said before, but it does not suffer in value through repetition, because every time I repeat it, it gains force: the British will have to take the risk of leaving India to chaos or anarchy. This is so, because there has been no Home Rule; it has been imposed on the people. And, when you voluntarily remove that rule, there might be no rule in the initial stage. It might have come about, if we had gained victory by the force of arms. The communal feuds you see here are, in my opinion, partly due to the presence of the British. If the British were not here, we would still go through the fire no doubt, but that fire would purify us."

Question: "What sort of Indo-British relationship do you envisage after June 1948?"

Gandhi: "I envisage the friendliest relationship between Britain and India, assuming that a complete withdrawal takes place with complete honesty behind it, with no mental reservations of any kind whatsoever."

Question: "Does the clause incorporated in the draft constitution on the abolition of untouchability represent a great reform?"

Gandhi: "No. That clause does not represent a great or any reform. It registers the fact that a great revolutionary reform has taken place in Hindu society. I confess that untouchability has not been

pulled out root and branch from the soil. Like the evil effects of the British connection, those of untouchability, a much older institution, don't disappear in a flash. It may take some years, perhaps, before a stranger coming to India can say that there is no untouchability in any shape or form."

Question: "Do you believe the United Nations Organization, as at present constituted, can maintain a lasting peace?"

Gandhi: "No. I fear the world is heading towards another showdown. It is a fear that permeates many minds. But if all goes well in India, then the world may have a long peace. It will largely depend on the manner in which India takes it. And that will depend largely on British statesmanship."

Question: "What is the solution to the Palestine problem?"

Gandhi: "It has become a problem which is almost insoluble. If I were a Jew, I would tell them: 'Do not be so silly as to resort to terrorism, because you simply damage your own case which otherwise would be a proper case.' If it is just political hankering, then I think there is no value in it. Why should the Jews hanker after Palestine? They are a great race and they have great gifts. I have lived with the Jews many years in South Africa. If it is a religious longing, then surely terrorism has no place.

"The Jews should meet the Arabs, make friends with them, and not depend on British aid or American aid or any aid, save what descends from Jehovah."

On May 6, as Gandhi had not returned from his interview with Jinnah, the prayers began without him at half past six. There was one objector again and, therefore, the prayer was said by observing two minutes' silence.

Referring to his visit to Jinnah, Gandhi said on May 7 that the conversations were carried on in a friendly spirit, even though there could never be an agreement between them on the question of the division of India. He could not bear the thought of it, and so long as he was convinced that it was wrong, he could not possibly put his signature to the scheme. He held that it was not only bad for the Hindus, but equally so for the Muslims.

He further added that many people were opposed to his going to Jinnah Saheb, but he was convinced that no harm could possibly have accrued therefrom. After all, they were fellow Indians and had to live in the same land.

Referring to a letter he had received from the wife of a prominent Hindu Mahasabhite, objecting to his reading the Koranic verse, he stated that he was hurt that such an objection could come from a woman. He expected love and toleration in a higher degree from women than from men. He wondered where they were drifting and what women would or could teach their own children, if their hearts were permeated with hate.

He refuted the argument that because some Muslim fanatics had done evil deeds in Bengal and in the Punjab, the Koran was bad. The Hindus had gone mad in Bihar, but that did not take away from the greatness of the Gita. He said that he might understand their not wishing to admit the Muslim wrongdoers into their homes, though even that was wholly contrary to the spirit of religion, all of which taught man to love even his enemies. But not to wish to read a verse from any scripture, simply because hate for the followers of that religion filled their hearts, was the negation of true religion and far from protecting Hinduism, was the very way to destroy it.

He said that the argument that he could not recite the Gita in a mosque and that no Muslims would read a verse from any scripture other than their own was a fallacious one. He related how he had held prayers in the Muslim houses and how in Noakhali he had held them in the compound of a mosque. The person in charge had raised no objection and had said that it was perfectly legitimate to call God by the names of Rama and Rahim.

Gandhi then read out the translation of the Koranic verse which was a part of his daily prayers:

"In order to escape from the evil one, I seek refuge in God.

"Oh God, I begin every task with the remembrance of Thy name.

"Thou art the compassionate and the merciful.

"Thou art the Creator of the universe.

"Thou art Lord and Master.

"I praise Thee alone and desire only Thy help.

"Thou wilt mete out justice on the Day of Judgement.

"Show me the right path, the path which Thy saints have trod, not the wrong path of those who have offended Thee.

"God is one.

"He is eternal, all-powerful, uncreate.

"There is none other like Him. He has created all things.

"None has created Him."

He stated that if every word of it were enshrined in their hearts they would be uplifted and be the better for it. No one objected to the translation, because it was in Hindi, but the moment he read it in Arabic, there were objections. He pleaded with the audience to see the folly of their ways. He hoped that they would pray to God to lighten their darkness.

At the close of the meeting, he announced his departure that very evening for Patna. On the train, on May 8th, he wrote a letter to Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy:

"Dear friend—It strikes me that I should summarize what I said and wanted to say and left unfinished for want of time, at our last Sunday's meeting.

"1. Whatever may be said to the contrary, it would be a blunder of first magnitude for the British to be a party in any way whatsoever to the division of India. If it has to come, let it come after the British withdrawal, as a result of understanding between the parties, or an armed conflict, which according to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah is taboo. Protection of minorities can be guaranteed by establishing a court of arbitration in the event of difference of opinion among contending parties.

"2. Meanwhile, the Interim Government should be composed of either the Congressmen or those whose names the Congress chooses or of Muslim League men, or those whom the League chooses. The dual control of today, lacking team work and team spirit, is harmful for the country. The parties exhaust themselves in the effort to retain their seats and to placate you. Want of team spirit demoralizes the Government and imperils the integrity of the services so essential for good and efficient government.

"3. Referendum at this stage in the Frontier, or any province for that matter, is a dangerous thing in itself. You have to deal with the material that faces you. In any case, nothing should or can be done over Dr. Khan Sahib's head as Premier. Note that this paragraph is relevant only if division is at all to be countenanced.

"4. I feel sure that the partition of Punjab and Bengal is wrong in every case, and a needless irritant for the Muslim League. This, as well as all innovations can come after the British withdrawal not before, except always for mutual agreement. Whilst British power is functioning in India, it must be held principally responsible for the preservation of peace in the country. That machine seems to be

cracking under the existing strain, which is caused by the raising of various hopes that cannot or must not be fulfilled. These have no place during the remaining thirteen months. This period can be most profitably shortened, if the minds of all were focussed on the sole task of withdrawal. You and you alone can do it to the exclusion of all other activity, so far as the British occupation is concerned.

"5. Your task as undisputed master of naval warfare, great as it was, was nothing compared to what you are called to do now. The single-mindedness and clarity that gave you success are much more required in this work.

"6. If you are not to leave a legacy of chaos behind, you have to make your choice and leave the government of the whole of India including the states to one party. The constituent assembly has to provide for the governance even of that part of India which is not represented by the Muslim League or some states.

"7. Non-partition of the Punjab and Bengal does not mean that the minorities in these provinces are to be neglected. In both the provinces, they are large and powerful enough to arrest and demand attention. If the popular Governments cannot placate them, the Governors should, during the interregnum, actively interfere.

"8. The intransmissibility of paramountcy is a vicious doctrine, if it means that they can become sovereign and a menace for independent India. All the power, wherever exercised by the British in India, must automatically descend to the successor. Thus the people of the states become as much part of independent India, as the people of British India. The present princes are puppets, created or tolerated for the upkeep and the prestige of the British power. The unchecked powers exercised by them over their people is probably the worst blot on the British Crown. The princes under the new regime can exercise only such powers as the trustees can and as can be given to them by the constituent assembly. It follows that they cannot maintain private armies or arms factories. Such ability and statecraft as they possess, must be at the disposal of the republic and must be used for the good of their people and the people as a whole. I have merely stated what should be done with the states. It is not for me to show in this letter how this can be done.

"9. Similarly difficult, but not so baffling, is the question of the Civil Services. Its members should be taught from now to accommodate themselves to the new regime. They may not be partisans

taking sides. The slightest trace of communalism among them should be severely dealt with. The English element in it should know that they owe loyalty to the new regime rather than to the old, and, therefore, to Great Britain. The habit of regarding themselves as rulers and, therefore, superiors must give place to the spirit of true service of the people.

"10. I had a very pleasant two hours and three quarters with Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah on Tuesday last. We talked about the joint statement on non-violence. He was agreeably emphatic over his belief in non-violence. He has reiterated it in a press statement which was drafted by him.

"11. We did talk about Pakistan-cum-partition. I told him that my opposition to Pakistan persisted as before, and suggested that, in view of his declaration of faith in non-violence, he should try to convert his opponents by reasoning with them and not by show of force. He was, however, quite firm that the question of Pakistan was not open to discussion. Logically, for a believer in non-violence, nothing, not even the existence of God, could be outside its scope.

"Rajkumari Amrit Kaur saw the first eight paragraphs, the purport of which she was to give to Pandit Nehru, with whom I was to send you this letter. But, I could not finish it in New Delhi. I finished it on the train."

## *Freedom Knocking*

1947

In his speech at Sodepur on May 9, 1947, Gandhi said that he had not expected to come to Calcutta, but when he had the reports from friends about events in Calcutta, he thought that he should go there. They knew that Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah was a joint signatory to the document on non-violence he had signed. That at once imposed on him the duty of fasting unto death, if either the Hindus or Muslims descended to the level of savages or beasts. Let the Hindus of Bihar and the Muslims of Noakhali remember the fact.

The next day, Gandhi answered some questions.

Question: "In view of the sourness between the Hindus and the Muslims that seemed to be daily growing, was it possible for them to become friends?"

Gandhi said emphatically that the enmity could not last for ever. They were brothers and they must remain so, in spite of temporary insanity. But perpetual feud was not an impossibility between communities, as it was not between two individuals. He hoped that that would not happen, for he prophesied that, in that case, they would bury the two religions in India and would sell their freedom for a mess of pottage.

The second question was: "Could partition of Bengal be avoided in view of the rising Hindu opinion in its favour?"

He recognized the force of that opinion. He himself was not in a position to pronounce an opinion. But he could say without fear of contradiction that if there was partition, the Muslim majority would be responsible for it and, what was more, the Muslim Government that was now in power. If he was the Prime Minister of Bengal, he would plead with his Hindu brethren to forget the past. He would say to the Hindus that he was as much a Bengali, as they were. Differences in religion could not part the two. We and they spoke the same language and had inherited the same culture. All that was

Bengal's was common to both, of which both should be equally proud. Bengal was Bengal. It was neither the Punjab, nor anything else. If the Prime Minister could possibly take up that attitude, he himself would undertake to go with him from place to place and reason with Hindu audiences, and he made bold to say that there would not be a Hindu opponent left of the unity of Bengal, the unity for which the Hindus and the Muslims had fought together so valiantly and undone "the settled fact" of so powerful a Viceroy as Lord Curzon. If he were Janab Suhrawardy, he would invite the Hindus to partition his body, before they thought of partitioning Bengal. If he had that sturdy love for Bengal and for the Bengalis, whether Hindus or Muslims, then that love would melt the stoniest Hindu heart, as it was Muslims' fear and suspicion that has seized the Hindu mind. He could not forget Noakhali or even Calcutta, if all he heard was true, as it was equally true of the Muslim mind in Bihar. And he had not hesitated to tell the Hindus of Bihar that they should remove all suspicion and fear from the Muslim mind. He believed in the sovereign rule of the law of love, which made no distinctions.

In the course of his prayer address on May 11, Gandhi said that he had the privilege of receiving Suhrawardy at Sodepur. He had wished to go to his house, but he would not let him go to his place. He had no information to give on the interview, save that he had to repeat what he had said the day before.

He then answered one question put to him at the prayer meeting: "You have advised us to work for an undivided Bengal. But can there be an undivided Bengal with a divided India?"

The answer was that if what he had said was well understood, it followed that nothing could happen without the joint wish of both the Hindus and Muslims. If a third party was not to decide their fate, it could be only decided by their joint will. Then, there was no question as yet of a divided India. If the distant event unfortunately did come to pass, the joint and free will of the Hindu and Muslim Bengalis would decide which part to join.

On May 12, Mr. Suhrawardy visited Gandhi, in order to plead for a united sovereign Bengal. Gandhi made a sporting offer to him and confirmed it in writing: "I recognize the seriousness of the position in Bengal in the matter of partition. If you are absolutely sincere in your professions and would disabuse me of all suspicion against

you and if you would retain Bengal for the Bengalis—Hindus and Musalmans—intact by non-violent means, I am quite willing to act as your honorary private secretary and live under your roof, till the Hindus and Musalmans begin to live as brothers that they are."

In his written prayer message of May 12, Gandhi said:

"The thought that is uppermost in my mind today is how to combat the goonda rule that seems to be fast enveloping us. This I say of all India; perhaps it is true more or less of the whole world.

"Let the Hindus not deceive themselves with the belief that it is well with them. As a devout Hindu that I claim to be, I wish to affirm that we Hindus will be living in a fool's paradise, if we harboured any such thought. Goondaism is no preparation for taking the place of foreign rule.

"The thoughtless interference at prayer meetings is not a small symptom of the disease I am describing. Intolerance is a form of goondaism. It is no less disgraceful than the savagery, which we see announced in daily news papers. Let all political workers, be they Hindu, Muslim or any other, ponder well over what is happening before their eyes. Let it not be said by the future generations that we were trying to learn how to lose our liberty before it was even gained. I would ask the school masters of India, now that they are no longer under the observation of the foreign masters, that they all should recognize their true function even at the risk of their lives to give the right bent to the minds of those whom it is their proud privilege to mould."

At the next prayer meeting, he dealt with some questions.

The first question was: "What could we do to save ourselves and our culture—whether Hindu or Muslim?"

He replied that he thought that nobody else could protect their culture for them. They had to protect it themselves and could destroy it by their folly. Thus, if Bengal had one culture, as he believed it had, it was for the people of Bengal to protect it.

The next question was: "When everything at the top goes wrong, can the goodness of the people at the bottom assert itself against its mischievous influence?"

Gandhi remarked that if the people at the top went wrong, it was certainly open to, and it was the duty of those at the bottom to remove the wrong top, even as he would remove an umbrella, which appeared to be at the top but which was sustained by him.

Thus Pandit Nehru was at the top. But in reality he was sustained by them. If he went wrong, those at the bottom could remove him without trouble. Coming nearer home, if they found Suhrawardy Saheb to be unworthy, they at the bottom could certainly remove him, not by physical force but by the way he had had the honour of putting before them. The argument that he was elected by the Muslim voters was beside the point.

It all boiled down to the fact that, if the people at the bottom were ignorant, they would be exploited. Such was the case with the English. When the people realized their strength and the fact that the bottom sustained the top, it would be well with them. And, therefore, he would say that if the top was wrong, there was something radically wrong with the bottom. Let people, therefore, dispel their ignorant helplessness.

Gandhi in his prayer speech of May 14 said that he was leaving for Patna and then proceeding to Delhi, and he hoped to return to Calcutta after his work in Delhi was over.

He had spent two hours in visiting the scenes of the recent disturbances in the company of the chief minister and could see that the destruction was small compared to the August disturbances. He hoped this was the last of disturbances in Calcutta.

Gandhi then replied to another question put to him: "Calcutta has virtually become divided into Hindu and Muslim zones. What can be done by the citizens so that the normal life can once again be restored?"

Gandhi said: "The only way is at least for one party to be wholly truthful and non-violent. Then they will fear no one but God. Such men are the men of courage. All the parties will make friends with them and even the goondas will shed their goondaism before them. I know of no other better way. I have appealed to the Muslims who are in a majority to take the lead."

On the day of his arrival in Patna, May 15, Gandhi said he had not foreseen his visit to Calcutta. For, his vow of "Do or Die" was taken only for Noakhali and Bihar. But what he heard about Calcutta made him feel that he might be called upon to go in future, though the possibility was very remote, he did not leave out Bihar or Noakhali. It only extended the field of the operation of his "Do or Die" mission. He felt that success at one place would be followed by success at other places. The future was in God's hands.

During his absence, he had kept himself informed about the work going on in Bihar. During the day, he received more information. The affairs in Bihar moved slowly. The Biharis were, however, not slow, when they committed acts of madness. There was no reason why they should be slow in making amends.

He informed the congregation that he could not bear the strain of touring every place in the heat. He had to content himself with holding his prayer meeting at different places every day.

The next day, Gandhi referred to his visit to the refugee camp near by, prior to the prayer meeting. He had not been able to see it as thoroughly as he would have liked to do. But what he saw and heard from the superintendent made him really glad.

The refugee camp was being run on the principle of self-help. Men worked and were paid their due. Children also worked, though they were paid more than what they would be otherwise entitled to. Such self-help bred self-respect.

They were innocent men and innocent women who had suffered at the hands of Hindus who had gone temporarily insane. It was the duty of Hindus, therefore, to make all amends they could. They should go and visit the refugees in the camp, interest themselves in every detail of their life and seek to help them in every way they could. If they did that, it would be in part payment of the debt that they owed to the refugees whom they had wronged.

Similarly, about the refugees who had left the province through fear or due to false propaganda, the Hindus need not beg them to come back. They should win them back by the magnetic power of their love. If they could create such an atmosphere of affection and brotherliness, most of the Muslims, who had now left the province, would return. His work and that of the Government would be considerably lightened. And Bihar would truly become the province of spring, as its name signified.

On May 17, he did not address the prayer gathering arranged at Dinapur because of the noise at the meeting which included a very large number of women and children. He, therefore, dispensed with the usual practice of two minutes' silence during the prayer.

Gandhi told the eager gathering that he felt that he was defeated in his attempt to make them hear what he wanted to say. He felt sorry for that. He told them that he was leaving the prayer ground without addressing them.

As his weekly silence had begun earlier in the day on May 18, the written message was read out to the prayer gathering. He said that it pained him that the day before he had to keep a large number of the audience without being able to give them his usual message. He thought that due to the carelessness or the inefficiency of the volunteers, or because of an insufficiency of loud speakers, the eager and vast crowd had to go away disappointed. "Such failures should be a matter of shame for us and we should learn to keep order, even when we gather in hundreds of thousands."

Gandhi said that if we were not able to observe this elementary rule of good conduct, we would not be able to retain our hard-won independence. Democracy required that every one, man or woman, should realize his or her own responsibility. That was, he thought, what was meant by panchayat raj. If any limb of the body ceased to function properly, the whole body became slack. Similarly, the whole of India was one body and the individuals were its limbs. If one limb should become slack or useless, the whole body would suffer proportionately. That was why he laid so much stress on lack of discipline at meetings, in trains or at railway stations.

He stated that he would go so far as to feel that if they had been trained to keep order at all gatherings, the Bihar riots would have been an impossibility.

Today, any disturbance was given a communal colour with the result that what was not meant to be a communal conflict turned into one. The volunteers, therefore, should realize how important it was to teach the people to keep order, whenever they congregated. This would not be accomplished by merely attempting it, when the meetings were actually being held. Previous training was necessary. Volunteers must go from house to house and give the people this necessary adult education.

On May 19, he addressed a huge but a perfectly quiet audience at Barh. He warned the people against falling into the snare of the seemingly plausible argument that in view of Muslim provocation, retaliation was inevitable and was the only effective method of putting an end to it. To answer brutality with brutality was to admit one's moral and intellectual bankruptcy, and it could only start a vicious circle of which they had seen so many manifestations. He could only say that if they continued their mad game, they would not be able to retain the independence that was coming.

Barh was one of those fortunate places which did not entirely go mad. But it could not escape the responsibility for the acts of those around it. It was difficult to estimate what India had already lost through madnesses like Bihar's, or what she might have to lose in future. The only way to escape the consequences of their acts was to show genuine repentance and thus lighten the heavy responsibility of Ansari Saheb, with which he had been entrusted by Bihar ministry. The people should refuse to shelter criminals who had acted barbarously, or who were still threatening the returning Muslims under the false belief that they had done something heroic. How it could be heroic, he failed to understand.

To the criminals Gandhi said that, as a mark of true repentance, they should surrender themselves to the police and bear the punishment that might be meted out to them. Even otherwise, it was in their interest to surrender, for if the Government and the police did their duty, which they must if they wanted to justify their existence, they would be arrested sooner or later. A voluntary surrender was bound to win them consideration from the court. What he had said should not be dismissed as a counsel of cowardice. Inculcation of cowardice was against his nature.

On May 20, the prayer was held at Hilsa, one of the areas worst affected during recent riots. Addressing the gathering Gandhi said that it was a matter of great shame and sorrow. But the shame of the sin could be turned to good account by an adequate repentance. All the religions that he had studied were full of instances proving the maxim: "The greater the sinner, the greater the sin." For the poignancy of the pain of the guilt enhanced the joy that a guiltless life brought with it. He wished that the maxim could be proved true in the reformed life of the people of Hilsa. They would be repelled by physical dirt. Surely, the repulsion caused by mental dirt which the insanity of the Hindus of Hilsa meant was much greater than the pain caused by any physical dirt however great. And he now was wondering how he could awaken the genuine repentance in the hearts of the Hindus of Hilsa. It had been suggested to him that if he settled down in Hilsa and went from house to house, he would be able to effect the desired transformation. Though there was some truth in the remark, he must own his physical weakness and consequent inability to follow their advice. They were none the better for his confession. And he hoped, therefore, that his remarks would

penetrate the hearts of the large audience, and that they would invite the Muslim sufferers to return.

He had been told that many Muslims came to see the place and, finding it unprepared, left it. He expected them to help the process of renovation of the shattered houses. Rainy season was approaching. They should, therefore, be quick about their work. Till then, it was their duty to accommodate the Muslims in their own houses, as they would accommodate their own blood relations. The Hindus and Muslims had lived like blood relations in Bihar before. There was no reason why they should not revive the old time.

If the Hindus showed a spirit of brotherliness, it would be good for Bihar, for India and the world.

He addressed a mammoth gathering at Bikram on May 21st. He congratulated the audience for keeping their sanity, while insanity raged all round, thanks to the efforts of the Congressmen and other Hindus. Still some tension did exist and many Muslims left the place out of fear. As the houses were intact, the problem of their repair did not arise. The Hindus could, however, clean up lanes and houses deserted by Muslims and create such an atmosphere of hospitality that the Muslims would be forced to return.

Gandhi next took up the thread of his address at Hilsa, where he had dropped it the day before. He had heard from various quarters that ever since the acceptance of office by the Congress, it was abandoning its tradition of penance, sacrifice and service, so painfully built up during its glorious history of over sixty years, from its humble beginnings in 1885 to the present day, when it had become a mighty organization having millions of followers. They said that Congress now was fast becoming an organization of selfish power-seekers and job-hunters. Instead of remaining the servants of the public, the Congressmen had now become its lords and masters. The Congress was, moreover, torn by petty intrigues and group rivalries. What he said was true of all the provinces. If that continued, he was afraid, Indians would not be able to retain the precious thing that was approaching. For that, they required knowledge, understanding and purity of mind. If the Congress and Muslim League did not retain the requisite purity and strength, they would find all power slipping from their hands. They could not hope to maintain it with the help of the bayonet like the British. Their power came from the people, who were the real masters, though they might not

realize that at the moment. The Congress had won their confidence through years of service. If it betrayed them, he was afraid, they would fall a prey to the white-robed goondas of society, in whose hands all power would pass.

He had come to Bihar for solving the Hindu-Muslim problem, but things were so interrelated that he was forced to take up the other issues as well. He had, therefore, dwelt on the corruption that was coming in the Congress. It should be above party intrigues and be a symbol of unity and service of the whole of India.

At Fatehpur, he explained how women could help in the work of rehabilitation. Fortunately, most of the Hindu women were free from purdah. True purdah should be of the heart. Whatever sanction outward purdah might have in any religion, it was entirely out of keeping with the present times.

Hindu women, therefore, could and should freely mix with their Muslim sisters and share their pain and sorrow. He had heard that at the Masurhi milk distributing centre, the Muslim children were objecting to taking milk in cups already used by the Hindu children. It should not make Hindus angry. It was their own untouchability practised against the Muslims and others which had infected the Muslims. Otherwise, untouchability should be foreign to the spirit of Islam. Hindu women, unalienated by this new sad development and full of the spirit of love and service, could perform the noble task of creating understanding among their Muslim sisters.

Gandhi's stand with regard to the Hindu-Muslim problem was made clear in his replies to the pertinent questions, on the eve of his departure to Delhi.

Question: "The Hindus being influenced by your preaching of ahimsa may in the near future get beaten by the Muslim League followers. This is the general feeling, in view of the belief that the Muslims are being secretly armed on a wide scale."

Gandhi: "The assumption is serious. If it is sound, then it casts a grave reflection upon provincial governments. In any event, how I wish that the Hindus were influenced by my teaching of ahimsa which is a force mightier than the force of arms, however powerful. No teacher can be held responsible for a caricature of his teachings. Do we not know how the geometrical propositions are caricatured by indifferent pupils? Are the teachers to be blamed? The utmost that can be said against me is that I am an incompetent teacher of

ahimsa. If such be the case, let us pray that my successor will be much more competent and successful."

Question: "After the British withdrawal from India, there is a likelihood of chaos and anarchy prevailing in the country. There is a fear that the nationalists, unless they immediately started learning self-defence with the fire-arms, may suffer and ultimately find themselves under the heels of the Muslim League whose followers believe only in fighting. Pakistan or no Pakistan, the trouble is coming, because there is the secret hand of imperialism working behind the scenes. Would you not modify your theory of ahimsa in the larger context of such a political situation overtaking the country for the sake of individual defence?"

Gandhi: "The nationalists are not worth the proud name they bear, if the nationalists fear the Muslim League, as you imagine. Can the nationalists exclude the followers of the Muslim League from the sphere of their action? I am not thinking of vote-catching devices. I am thinking of the Muslims as Indians, the same as others, needing their care and attention. If the leaders have ceased to believe in ahimsa, they should boldly and frankly say so and set about putting their own house in order. For me, there is no scope for any change. Ahimsa is no mere theory with me, it is a fact of life based on extensive experience. How can a man who has tasted the apples and repeatedly found them sweet be induced to describe them as bitter. Those who say they are bitter, have tasted not the apples, but something looking very much like the apples. Ahimsa should not fear the secret or open hand of imperialists, assuming for the sake of argument that it is working as suggested in the question."

In the sweltering heat of Delhi, Gandhi arrived on May 25, in answer to Nehru's call. Both Sardar and Nehru had wired to him to go to Mussoorie, where they had gone for brief rest and change. But he could not go, as he had promised himself not to leave his field of service, till friendly relations were established between the two communities in Noakhali, Bihar and Calcutta.

The Chinese Ambassador, Dr. Lo Chia Luen, came with Nehru to see Gandhi. "How do you think the things will shape themselves? How do you predict the future?" he asked.

Gandhi said in reply: "I am an irrepressible optimist. We have not lived and toiled in vain all these years that we should become barbarians, as we appear to be becoming, looking at all the senseless

bloodshed in Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab. But I feel that it is just an indication that as we are throwing off the foreign yoke, all the dirt and froth is coming to the surface. When the Ganges is in flood, the water is turbid. The dirt comes to the surface. When the flood subsides, you see the clear blue water which soothes the eye. That is what I hope for and live for. I do not wish to live to see Indian humanity becoming barbarian.

"Who can predict the future? Years ago I read Butler's *Analogy*. Therein I read, that the 'future is the result somewhat of our past.' This thought has persisted with me, because it coincides with the Indian belief. We are the makers of our own destiny. We can mend or mar the present and on that will depend the future."

The Chinese Ambassador was thoughtful: "History sometimes repeats itself, because we do not learn the lesson of history."

Gandhi replied: "It is only a half truth. History may seem to be repeating itself today. I believe that nothing remains static. Human nature either goes up or goes down. Let us hope, in India, it is going up. Otherwise, there is nothing but deluge for India, probably for the whole world."

On the very first day of his arrival in Delhi, Gandhi wrote for *Harijan* an editorial entitled "How to Combat Himsa":

"Question: The leaders and followers of the Muslim League do not believe in attaining their object through non-violence. In such circumstances, how is it possible to melt their hearts or to convince them of the evil of violent action?"

"Answer: Violence can only be effectively met by non-violence. This is an old, established truth. The questioner does not really understand the working of non-violence. If he did, he would have known that the weapon of violence, even if it was the atom bomb, became useless, when matched against true non-violence. That very few understand how to wield this mighty weapon is true. It requires a lot of understanding and strength of mind. It is unlike what is needed in military schools. The difficulty one experiences in meeting *himsa* with ahimsa arises from weakness of mind."

"Question: Today the people are beginning to feel that a clash, possibly of a violent character, with the supporters of the League is inevitable. Nationalists feel that until the League agrees to partition of Bengal and the Punjab, its demand for Pakistan is unjust. What means should they adopt to meet the situation?"

"Answer: If the answer to the first question is held valid, then the second question does not arise. However, the question may be discussed for a clearer understanding. If the majority of the Muslims obey Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah, a violent conflict should be out of the question, or if the majority of the Hindus take their stand on non-violence, no matter how much violence the Muslims use, it is bound to fail. One thing, however, should be perfectly understood. The votaries of non-violence cannot harbour violence even in thought, let alone the question of doing it. If Pakistan is wrong, the partition of Bengal and the Punjab will not make it right. Two wrongs will not make one right."

"Question: The majority of the socialists claim that, if there was a socialist revolution, the economic question will come to the forefront, throwing the communal conflict in the background. Do you agree? If such a revolution takes place, will it promote the establishment of the Kingdom of God, which you call Ram Raj?"

"Answer: The economic conflict you envisage is likely to make the Hindu-Muslim tension less acute. Even the end of the Hindu-Muslim conflict will not end all our troubles. What is happening is this. With the end of the slavery and the dawn of independence, all the weaknesses of society are bound to come to the surface. I do not see any reason to be unnecessarily upset about. If we keep our balance at such a time, then every tangle will be solved. As far as the economic question is concerned, it has to be solved in any case. Today, there is gross economic inequality. The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no Ram Raj in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which, only a few roll in riches, while the masses do not get even enough to eat. I accepted the theory of socialism, even while I was in South Africa. My opposition to the socialists and the others consists in attacking violence as a means of effecting any lasting reform."

"Question: You say that a raja, a zamindar or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exists today? Or do you expect them to be so transformed?"

"Answer: I think that some very few exist even today, although not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present rajas and the others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances

will compel the reform, unless they court utter destruction. When panchayat raj is established, public opinion will do, what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the rajas can hold sway, only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In the panchayat raj only the panchayat will be obeyed and the panchayat can only work through the law of their making."

During Gandhi's previous visit to Delhi he had often to suspend public prayers, as a result of some individuals' vociferous objection to the recitation of verses from the Koran. This time also a woman sent him a letter, on the very first day, protesting against the recitation of the Koran. She was present at the prayer meeting. Before starting the prayer, he explained that he could not stop it, because one or two persons objected to it. The owners of the temple, where he was staying, did not object. He added that the Delhi audience had obtained mastery over itself, so as to hearten him in the belief that they would not be provoked to do any injury to the objector. He, therefore, felt that prayer should be held, irrespective of whether anyone objected or not. There was a similar incident at Calcutta, but the public prayer was held, because the vast gathering, which had assembled, wanted it. The objector desisted ultimately. He would not stop prayer every time someone objected. He asked the people to pray, leaving disturbers unmolested.

The prayer was held undisturbed and Gandhi congratulated the objecting woman for observing the outward decorum at least. That was the least that laws of public prayer demanded. He hoped there would be no disturbance from anyone in future.

But on the second day, she wrote again to say that the Sikhs and the Hindus had suffered untold miseries and hardships at the hands of the Muslims. The Koran preached killing of non-Muslims. How could he include verses from such Koran in his prayers? She tried to shout and cause disturbance, when the prayer was started. The volunteers led her away.

She wrote protesting against the holding of prayer and against the volunteers leading her away. It was wrong on the part of any man to touch a woman.

Replying to her on two successive days, Gandhi said that he did not agree that it was always wrong on the part of a man to touch

a woman. He himself leaned on girls' shoulders during his walks. There was nothing wrong in it. It was wrong for a man to touch a woman, if it was done with a lustful impulse.

Public prayer, he continued, was a precious privilege. It could not be lightly thrown away. It was a good thing to pray silently when someone objected, even though wrongly, and there was danger of the objector being molested. But he was glad that there was such an exemplary response to his entreaty and the audience had remained perfectly and deliberately passive. He had received threats that if he persisted in reciting verses from the Koran, there would be a black flag demonstration on the prayer ground against it. He said that he would hold the prayers, in spite of the demonstration. He requested the audience to take no notice of the demonstrators, if they came. And even if they all joined the demonstration and brought black flags and lathis and began to beat him, he hoped that he would still go on repeating God's name under their blows, without harbouring any ill will towards them. He might be killed, but they would afterwards feel sorry for what they had done. If, on the other hand, he retaliated and even succeeded in killing a few, he would ultimately be killed and they would feel proud of their victory.

To the objecting woman Gandhi said that she had been misled. He had read the Koran, which she had not. Nowhere did it preach killing of the non-Muslims. It preached justice for all human beings, not that all the Muslims had lived up to that teaching. But had all the Hindus lived up to the teaching of the Gita or the Vedas? Did that detract from the greatness of the Gita or of the Vedas? Why should the misdeeds of the Muslims detract from the greatness of the Koran? It was wrong to develop a dislike for the scriptures of those, some of whom might become temporarily insane.

There was a strong rumour afoot that on June 2, following the Viceroy's statement, there would be widespread riots. There was a tense atmosphere of expectancy as to what the Viceroy would bring. Deprecating this mentality, Gandhi said that he felt sorry that the people should look to London for their own future. Independence of India, which was their real Kohinoor, was there right in front of them to decide whether to take it or to discard it. There was endless speculation, as to what the British political parties wanted to do or would desire to be done. All this should not affect Indian independence, if only the people of India decided to have it.

Following the same thought in the written message of May 26th Gandhi said:

"It is unbecoming on our part to look to London for what the British Cabinet thinks. It is not for them to give us liberty. They can only get off our back. That they are under promise to do. But for keeping it and giving it shape, we have to look to ourselves. I promised to tell you how we were to do it. In my opinion, we are unable to think coherently, whilst the British power is still functioning in India. Its function is not to change the map of India. All it has to do is to withdraw and leave India, carrying out the withdrawal, if possible, in an orderly manner, may be even in chaos, but withdraw in any case on or before the promised date.

"There is an additional reason why no vital change in the shape of Hindustan is possible in the present state of the country. There is the joint statement issued by the Qaid-e-Azam and me. It enunciates a sound principle that there should be no violence employed in the pursuit of political aims. If in the teeth of that document, the country continues the mad career of violence of the worst kind and if the British power is weak enough to submit to it in the vain hope that after the mad thirst is quenched things will run smooth, it would have left a bloody legacy for which not only India, but the whole world will blame Britain. We will then have learnt the cruel lesson that everything was to be got, if mad violence was perpetrated in sufficient measure. I would, therefore, urge every patriot and certainly the British power to face out the worst violence and leave India, as it can be left under the Cabinet Mission document of 16th May of the last year. Today, in the presence of the British power, we are only demoralized by the orgy of blood and arson and worse. After it is withdrawn, let me hope, we shall have one India or split it into two or more parts. But if we are bent even then on fighting, I am sure we will not be so demoralized as we are today, though, admittedly, all violence carries with it some amount of demoralization. I shall hope against hope that India free will not give the world an additional object-lesson in violence, with which it is already sick almost unto death."

A message from Bihar said that tension was increasing in view of the rumour that there would be unparalleled massacre and bloodshed following the Viceroy's declaration about transfer of power on June 2. It hurt him deeply, said Gandhi. Why should they look to

the Viceroy for what he would bring? And why should that make the Hindus and the Muslims panicky? There had been rumours of a similar nature previously also, but nothing untoward had happened. He hoped that the present scare would similarly prove baseless. This much he wanted to convey to the Hindus of Bihar that, if they went mad again and began killing the Muslims there, whom he regarded as his blood brothers and who looked upon him as their friend, they would kill him.

He had received a letter from a Sindhi friend. The Hindus were in panic there. Had the Hindus and the Muslims all become brutes? Had they no fear of God?

The talk went about that he was staying in Bihar, no doubt, in order to help the Muslims, but the result would be that the Hindus would be butchered. He had told the Hindus that, even if Muslims went mad, they should not lose their reason. He was not ashamed of giving that advice to anyone. The Hindus were in a minority in the Punjab, but there were the brave Sikhs, each one of whom considered himself equivalent to one lakh and one-fourth. Did it mean that one Sikh could shed as much blood as one lakh and one-fourth? He thought not. It meant that one Sikh could stand up to one and one-fourth lakh persons against him. In that sense, it was a tribute to the bravery of the Sikhs. Not one Sikh should stand by and see a wrong perpetrated. He should give his life to prevent it. His advice, therefore, to the Sikhs also was that whatever might have been the use of the sword in Sikh history, in this age of the atom bomb, there was no weapon like non-violent resistance. It did not make cowards of men. It infused courage even in the women. If he recommended non-violence, it was because he was fully convinced that it was the weapon of the really brave.

Some one asked him what should be done with a mad dog? His answer was that if the friend meant a mad dog literally, he himself would say that, in the first place, a dog would not go mad amongst really god-fearing men. But supposing in the presence of such men who considered themselves of God, they found a dog running amuck, then they would naturally kill that dog, rather than allow many of themselves to be bitten by the rabid dog and be sent to Kasauli for treatment.

But what if a human being went mad? His own brother had once gone mad. The speaker was a small boy of ten at that time. But his

mother and father did not have the mad son killed. They sent for vaidyas and doctors and had him treated and cured.

"You are my blood brothers," he said, "whether you are Hindus or Muslims. Supposing you go mad and I have a battalion at my command, would I have you shot? No. I would not like to be shot myself, if I went mad. My friend's son went mad. I had to send him to the lock-up, but I would not have him killed."

Today the madness of communal frenzy had taken possession of the country. People talked of country-wide riots on June 2. He was convinced none of them wanted rivers of blood to flow. One had to put up with mad frenzy and not begin to be frenzied himself by way of retaliation.

Another correspondent had written a letter saying that whenever the Viceroy invited the leaders from the Interim Government for discussions, he invited the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs. Were there no other communities in India? What about the Parsis, the Christians, the Jews and others? They had been with the Congress. Were they to be suppressed by the vociferous elements? The Sikhs were a brave race. The Muslims had raised a hue and cry for years and so they were being consulted. Were the quiet citizens to have no voice in shaping the destiny of the country?

The question was relevant and important, replied Gandhi. If the Sikhs and the Hindus and the Muslims thought themselves to be the only people that mattered and the rights of the other communities were in any way less than their own, they would prove themselves utterly unworthy. The curses of the innocent would destroy them. Such a Government would never be Ram Raj, or the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

It was the supreme duty of every citizen to treat the lowliest on a par with the others. If some persons became mad, that was no justification for the others to follow suit. If Indians decided to live independently, none in the world, not even the combination of the powerful nations, could thwart them.

Division of India and the consequent partition of the Punjab and Bengal was being discussed in the press for some time. Speaking at prayer meeting on May 29, Gandhi said that during the few days that remained between now and June 2, he would love to speak to them daily on some aspect or the other of the topic that was uppermost in their minds.

By their exemplary restraint and attention, the people had drawn him and enabled him to open out his heart to them. How he wished that all those who called themselves the sons of the soil would think well and act bravely—a very difficult performance at the moment when newspapers gave gruesome details about senseless arson and murder. He himself was not perturbed with the thought of June 2. He returned to India in 1915, after spending twenty years of the prime of life in South Africa. He had not resided there to make money. He had realized early in life that God had created him to serve his fellow beings. In that service, lay the service of God. That was the lesson of the first verse of the *Ishopanishad*: "That which is yours is not yours, it belongs to God; and that which belongs to the others is certainly not yours." What was one to fight for?

Senseless correspondents would have him take to forest life, unless he would ask the Hindus to answer sword with sword and arson with arson. He could not oblige them by denying the whole of his life and by being guilty of advocating the law of the brute in place of the law of man. Rather, he would plead with leaders of all parties at least to have courage to refuse to yield to brute force.

He was not thinking of the eternal law of love, much as he believed in it. If the whole of India accepted it, India would become the unquestioned leader of the whole world. Here he merely wished to suggest that there should be no surrender, except to reason.

They had worked hard for achieving freedom. They had bravely faced the bayonets of the mighty British Empire. Why should they falter now? Let them not make the mistake on the eve of hard won freedom of thinking that they were likely to lose it if they did not yield, even though it be to brute force. That way lay perdition.

He discounted all cables that came from London. He must cling to the hope that Britain would not depart by a hair's breadth from the letter and spirit of the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16 of the last year, unless the parties of their own free will came to an agreement on any variation. For that purpose, they had to meet together and hammer out an acceptable solution. That statement had been accepted by the Congress and the British Government. If either of them went back on it, it would be a breach of faith.

And if they would face reality in terms of the welfare of their own country, they would agree first to establish peace in the country, telling the turbulent elements in the country firmly and boldly that

there could be no departure from that document of May 16, until they stopped the sanguinary strife.

The constituent assembly was sitting in terms of the May 16th document. It was for the British to hand over power and quit. The Government of free Indians formed under the constitution worked out by the constituent assembly could do anything afterwards—keep India one or divide it into two or more parts.

British officials should know what people were whispering. Many believed that their hand was in the riots. He must refuse to believe the serious charge, unless it was established beyond doubt.

Lord Mountbatten had no easy task before him. Here there was no question of brilliant naval strategy. It was one of honest and brave statesmanship. May God endow the Viceroy with required courage and wisdom.

Speaking after prayer on May 30, Gandhi observed that he had been telling them all these days not to look to London or to the Viceroy, but to look to themselves. He did not mean to suggest that the Englishmen in London were bad men or that the Viceroy was not a good man. He believed that they were good men. But one did not want the interference of even good men in one's domestic affairs. They had in any case decided to go. There was no mention of safeguards for the British interests. The Britishers in the Civil Services could stay on, if the Indian Government would keep them. But they had to stay on their own responsibility. Not a single British soldier would be left for their protection and their safety would be in their winning the goodwill of the Indians through service. And the same thing applied to the British traders and business men. That was the meaning of "Quit India". June 1948 was the last date on which they were pledged to quit India. Let them look to their duty, while we look to ours. And how could Indians perform their duty?

He had often wondered, whether he represented anybody except himself. He did not represent the Congress, because he was not even a four-anna member of the Congress. He sometimes did speak for the Congress, but that was by right of service. Similarly, he could speak for the princes and even the Muslim League. Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah wanted his signature to the joint appeal for peace issued by both of them sometime ago.

Being the joint author of the famous statement signed by Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah, he should represent him at least in the one deciding

and supreme factor of peace. Did he represent the Qaid-e-Azam? If he did, they should be found working on the same platform and not resting, till they had secured peace in the land of their birth, or died in the attempt. He knew that he did not represent those who burnt villages near Gurgaon and committed murder. Whether they were Muslims or Hindus or both did not matter to him. They were all children of Mother India. It was unfortunate that the Interim Government had inherited a bad tradition and, therefore, they did not know who killed whom. It was the deed of "the members of a certain community." Why should they not be frank and bold enough to name the butcher by his name? Anyway, he had made it quite clear the day before that, if he had his own will, there never would be Pakistan before peace, and certainly not through the British intervention. After the joint peace statement, Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah had left no way open to himself, but the way of conviction through cold reason for the attainment of Pakistan. Let him first establish peace with or without his (Gandhi's) association and afterwards convene a meeting at his house, or anywhere else, of the Indian leaders of all classes and communities, plead with them the cause of Pakistan and wait till he had carried conviction to them. Let him dismiss the Caste Hindus from his brain. He would assure Jinnah Saheb that in the ocean of Indian humanity and even Hindu humanity, they were but a microscopic minority, if the Shudras were excluded. By the Caste Hindus were generally known Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The Qaid-e-Azam himself had excluded the Scheduled Classes from this category and, therefore, would have to exclude the Shudras. For the wretched caste system had always traduced the Shudras, who together with Atishudras, made the millions. If Pakistan of Jinnah Saheb's conception was a reasonable proposition, he should have no difficulty in convincing India. Let him not appeal to the British power or its representative Lord Mountbatten. The Viceroy's function was only to quit India, at the latest, by the end of June next year, leaving India at peace if possible, but quit in any case, peace or no peace. An imposed peace would be the peace of the grave of which all India and the British should be ashamed. Let it not be said that he (Gandhi) was too late on the scene. He was not. It was never too late to mend, never too late to replace the force of the sword with that of reason. Could the British dare to impose Pakistan on an India temporarily gone mad?

Was Pakistan, according to Jinnah Saheb, a state, where every child would enjoy the fullest security, where there would be no caste and no distinctions of high and low, where there would be justice for all? No one could have anything against such a Pakistan. He himself would tour with Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah all over and explain to the people that they could all live happily in that Pakistan. But the happenings in the Frontier, the Punjab and Bengal did not encourage such a belief.

One friend had sent him some literature to prove that the Koran preached killing of kafirs, non-believers. He had been in the midst of the Muslims all his life. No one had ever suggested to him that he should be killed as a kafir. He had been in the midst of the maulvis in Noakhali. Learned Muslims had told him that the meaning of the particular verse of the Koran was that God would take to account the so-called non-believer. But that He would do to Muslims also. God judged men by their deeds and not by their words. There was a mention of terrible punishments in the *Bhagwat*, the *Manu Smriti* and the Vedas. Yet the central teaching of the Hindu religion was· "Mercy or kindness is the essence of all religion." He wanted them to bear in mind what Tulsidas had said: "Good and bad, all men are the creation of God. The man of God picks up the good and discards the bad like the proverbial swan, which is able to drink the milk and leave behind water, when a mixture of water and milk is placed before it."

Before commencing the prayer on May 31, he told the audience that he wanted every word of what he said to them these days to sink deep into their hearts. The best way to listen was to keep their heart and mind open.

Speaking after prayers, he told the audience how for a period of fifty-four years, since the light of non-violence had dawned upon him in the far-off South African days, he had been trying to instil into them the beauty, truth and power of this matchless weapon. And yet there was the objector foolish enough to ask them to imprison Jinnah Saheb. He said that Jinnah Saheb could not be imprisoned by them and, if he could be, he would gain more strength. He further suggested that the only way to do so was by remaining adamant against the establishment of Pakistan by force and by being friendly towards Jinnah Saheb. If all followed his advice, it was not impossible one fine evening to find Jinnah Saheb side by side with him.

He himself was the enemy of none, and hence he claimed to represent Jinnah Saheb, as he claimed to represent even the Englishmen even whilst they repudiated the claim. He told how one Pathan, his client at one time, had become his enemy and then his friend, when he had discovered his mistake.

He then came to the topic he wanted to discuss that evening. He reminded them that the previous evening he had said that in a free India, they would neither have Birla raj nor Nawab of Bhopal raj. They would have the panchayat raj. In a free India the individuals did not count, except as such. Therefore, in Kashmir, it was not the maharaja with his soldiery that would count, but the Muslims who were the vast majority there. The same thing applied to the rulers of Hyderabad and Bhopal, Travancore and Baroda and the rest. He fervently hoped that the Hindu and Muslim princes would not take sides. It would be an evil day, if they did. Princes, therefore, would be wisely advised if they joined the constituent assembly. If the British were sincere, then they would see to it that there was no prince left capable of doing mischief.

Having spoken about the princes, Gandhi took the audience with him to a Harijan named Chakrayya, who had become a son to him in Sevagram, and who had died in a hospital in Bombay three days ago. He was a true and brave young man. He was trained after the model of basic education. His conduct was exemplary. He belonged to Andhra and he had learnt Hindustani. He was a firm believer in nature cure and he would have willingly given up his life, if nature cure did not cure him of a tumour of the brain, had he (Gandhi) not intervened and wanted him to undergo what proved to be now a fatal operation, in spite of all the care bestowed upon him by the best surgeon in the hospital. He was proud to be able to say that Chakrayya died with Ramanam on his lips, whilst he was conscious. It was the deceased's ambition, if he had lived, to work amongst the Harijans of Andhra. His putting Chakrayya's name side by side with the princes had a meaning all its own.

On June 1, the usual interruption took place at the reading of the Koranic verse. Gandhi asked the people to bear with the insanity of the interrupter and he also pleaded with the police not to remove him from the prayer ground, if he remained quiet. Both the requests were honoured and he congratulated the audience and the policemen for their restraint. He then turned to the interrupter and told him

that he would not have the usual *bhajan* if he continued the interruption, and he rebuked him for his rudeness. He claimed to be a sanatani Hindu himself. The sacred thread and the tuft of hair did not make a Hindu, without a pure heart and a spirit of toleration. The rebuke quietened the interrupter and the *bhajan* and Ramdhun were sung. Gandhi congratulated him on his ultimate restraint. He then told the audience with sorrow that Badshah Khan had during the day said that, perhaps, it would be best if he did not come to the prayer, lest his presence might offend. But he insisted on his coming. The daily interruptions were a sign of madness and did no good to the Hindu religion.

Commenting on the quality of discipline required in a free people he gave an instance that of the English people. He related the story of Queen Victoria, when at the age of seventeen, she was awakened one night to be told that she was the Queen of England. The young girl was naturally agitated and was overawed at the terrible responsibility thrown on her by God. The old Prime Minister, as he knelt before the queen, consoled her. She merely said that she would be good. It was the disciplined people of England who helped her to govern. Today, he wanted them to realize that independence was at their door. The Viceroy was only the nominal head of the cabinet. They would help the Viceroy by expecting no help from him in the government of the country. Their uncrowned king was now Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He was working and slaving for them, not as a king, but as their first servant. It was his desire, through the service of India, to serve the world. Jawaharlal was an international figure and he had friendly relations with all the foreign ambassadors who were now in India. But it was not possible for Jawaharlal alone to govern, if the people by their indiscipline spoiled the work. For, he could not, as did the former autocrats, resort to the rule of sword. That would be neither the panchayat raj, nor Jawahar raj. (There was play upon the word *jawahar* meaning jewel.) It was the duty of everyone to make the task of their ministers easy and not to force their hands in any way.

Gandhi reminded the audience how a year ago Nehru had gone to Kashmir when he was urgently needed in Delhi, and how at the bidding of the Maulana Saheb, the then President of the Congress, he had returned to Delhi. Today, Jawaharlal was talking of wanting to go to Kashmir again. His heart was sore, because the leader of

the Kashmiris, Sheikh Abdullah, was still in prison. But he (Gandhi) felt that Jawaharlal's presence here was more necessary and offered to go in his place. There were many things to be considered, before he was permitted by Jawaharlal to go. If he went to Kashmir, he would even from there serve Bihar and Bengal, as if he was bodily in one of the provinces.

Gandhi then reiterated what he had said the day before that the rulers of all the states in India were no more than individuals, like anyone else. The rulers could justify themselves only as servants of the people. The British power was to go from every corner of India, and it was impossible to think of an undemocratic rule anywhere in a democratic India.

What he said about the princes applied equally to the rich business community of India. He would appeal to them also to be honest and pure in all their dealings and trade, not for themselves but for the people. It was they who created the black market, it was they who often made the prices of the commodities soar, as was happening in the case of salt, for instance. If they were like an honest *bania* that he was by birth, there would be no shortage of food and Rajendra Babu's task would be greatly lightened.

It had hurt him much to hear from Jawaharlal that the English people were living on short rations. He was certain that if all put their shoulders to the wheel and were honest, and if the god of rain favoured them, India would not only feed herself but could spare food for starved England also. Unfortunately, they found greed, dishonesty and internecine senseless quarrel stalking the land. He had no doubt that India could become a model country, the cynosure of every eye, and the leader in world peace, if only all her people would exercise self-restraint and be her disciplined servants.

He answered some questions put to him by the United Press of America on June 1.

Question: "Do you now feel that India will ultimately be united under one Central Government, regardless of what the immediate settlement may be?"

Gandhi: "The future will depend upon what we do now."

Question: "Do you see any possibility of the world being united under one central governing body composed of the representatives of the component parts?"

Gandhi: "That is the only condition on which the world can live."

Question: "Do you think there is any possibility of an armed conflict between Russia and the United States?"

Gandhi: "Anything is possible, but it is highly improbable."

Question: "What do you feel is the most acceptable solution to the Palestine problem?"

Gandhi: "Abandonment wholly by the Jews of terrorism and other forms of violence."

Question: "Do you believe that Egypt and Sudan should unite under one government, when the British leave?"

Gandhi: "I have no doubt that they ought to."

Question: "As a result of your experiment, during the past five months, do you feel that the principle of non-violence can still be triumphant in the solution of the world's problems?"

Gandhi: "My five months in Noakhali have only confirmed my previous experience that non-violence can solve all our ills."

# *Glossary*

Abala, void of strength; weak; woman.
Acharya, preceptor, teacher.
Achutistan, land of the untouchables.
Adivasi, aborigines.
Ahimsa, non-violence.
Allah-O-Akbar, God is great.
Ashram, a hermitage; a place for study and discipline of life.
Ati-Shudra, lower in caste than a Shudra; untouchable.
Avatar, an incarnation of God.
Ayurvedic, belonging to Hindu system of medicine.
Azadi, independence.
Babu, Mr.
Badshah, emperor.
Badi, cottage.
Bania, merchant.
Bhai, brother.
Bhajan, a hymn.
Bhandar, store.
Bhangi, scavenger.
Bharat-ki-jai, victory to Bharat, *i.e.*, India.
Bigha, a measure of land, generally five-eighths of an acre.
Chakki, wheel.
Chapati, thin flat cake made of wheat flour; bread.
Charkha, a spinning wheel.
Cowrie, shell, once used as a coin.
Darshan, sight of a venerated person or deity.
Dar-ul-harb, land of the non-believers, *i.e.*, of non-Muslims.
Deenbandhu, friend of the poor.
Deshbandhu, friend of the country.
Devkapas, a kind of cotton.

Dewan, prime minister.
Dharma, duty; religion.
Dharmashala, a building donated for charitable uses; a pilgrim's rest house.
Diwali, Hindu festival of lamps.
Duragraha, insistence on wrong doing or untruth; as opposed to satyagraha.
Fakir, a Muslim ascetic.
Gayatri, an invocation of sun-god; a mantra recited by the twice-born Hindus.
Ghanchi, oil-presser.
Ghani, oil-press.
Ghee, clarified butter.
Goonda, hooligan.
Goshala, cowshed.
Gram, village.
Gurudev or guru, a preceptor; a spiritual guide.
Hakim, a doctor practising the Muslim system of medicine.
Hartal, strike.
Harijan, a man of God; untouchable.
Hijra, a Muslim era.
Himsa, violence.
Holi, Hindu spring festival.
Iman, honour.
Jai, victory.
Jai Hind, victory to India.
Jamdani, a hand-woven cotton textile with traditional design.
Janab, sir.
Jatiya Sarkar, national government, parallel government.
Jayanti, anniversary.
Jehad, religious war of Muslims against unbelievers.
Ji, an affix added to names denoting respect, *e.g.*, Gandhiji.
Kalma, basic Muslim prayer.
Khaddar or khadi, hand-woven cloth from hand-spun yarn.
Khudai Khidmatgar, Servant of God, Red Shirt volunteer.
Khal, canal.
Khan, nobleman.
Khol, a sort of drum.
Khuda, God.

Kirpan, sword.
Kisan, peasant.
Kshai, defeat; destruction.
Lathi, stick.
Lokamanya, respected by the people.
Lota, a small metal water-pot.
Ma-bap, parent; parental.
Mahatma, great soul.
Mandir, a Hindu temple.
Mantra, a sacred formula; incantation.
Masjid, mosque.
Matrubhasha, mother tongue.
Maulana, a Muslim divine.
Maulvi, a Muslim priest.
Mehetar, scavenger.
Nagar, town.
Namasankirtan, recitation of God's name.
Namashudra, low caste; untouchable.
Nayee Talim, New Education or Basic Education.
Netaji, leader.
Panchayat, a village council of five elected members; a council of village elders.
Pandit, a learned Hindu teacher; a prefix to certain Brahmin family names, *e.g.*, Pandit Nehru.
Pani, water.
Papaiya, papaw.
Pariah, outcaste.
Patel, a village headman.
Pradip, lamp.
Purdah, veil; custom of keeping women in seclusion or under a veil.
Qaid-e-Azam, great leader.
Raj, rule.
Raja, king.
Ramanam, the name of god Rama.
Ramdhun, recitation of the name of god Rama.
Ram Raj, kingdom of Rama; beneficent rule.
Rashtrabhasha, national language.
Rishi, a seer.
Sabha, assembly; conference.

Sabhi bhumi Gopalki, all land belongs to the cultivator.
Salam, salutation.
Salam Alaikum, peace be unto you.
Samagra Gramseva, all-round service to a village.
Samvat, a Hindu era.
Sanatani, orthodox Hindu.
Sangh, organization.
Sanyasi, one who has renounced the worldly life; a recluse.
Sardar, nobleman; a honorific term, *e.g.*, Sardar Patel.
Satya, truth.
Satyagraha, " a force which is born of truth and non-violence "; tenacious clinging to truth; civil or non-violent resistance.
Satyagrahi, one practising satyagraha.
Savarna, Caste Hindu.
Seva Sangh, service league.
Shabnam, a variety of a superfine muslin cloth—hand-spun and hand-woven.
Shamiana, a canopy.
Shastra, the religious law books of the Hindus.
Shloka, verse.
Shri, Mr.
Sthitaprajna, man of steady wisdom.
Sutra, aphorism.
Swami, a monk.
Swaraj, self-government; self-rule.
Takli, spindle-like spinning instrument.
Tal, rhythm.
Taluk, a revenue division.
Tapascharya, penance; austerity; single-minded devotion.
Tebhaga, a contract between a landlord and cultivator in which one-third of the crop yield goes to the landlord.
Tejas, energizing principle.
Thana, a police station.
Uludhwani, an utterance of welcome on auspicious occasion.
Vaidya, a doctor practising the Hindu system of medicine.
Yogic, practice pertaining to yoga.
Zamindar, landlord.
Zamindari, landlordism.
Zenana, veiled part of house in which women are secluded.

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